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SERMONS

Upon the following

SUBJECTS.

The natural Difference between
Moral Good and Evil.

The Efficacy of Religious Faith.

The true Happiness of Man-
kind.

The Folly of Denying, or of
Wishing against, the Exist-
ence of the Deity.

The Sanctity and moral Go-
vernment of God.

The Nature, rational Grounds,
and necessary Qualifications
of Prayer.

The Nature, various Kinds,
Causes, and evil Consequen-
ces of Superstition; with Rea-
sons for guarding against it,
and the Methods of prevent-
ing, or remedying it.

The moral Value and Worth
of Faith considered, and par-
ticularly exemplified in the
Belief of our Saviour's Re-
surrection.

The Use, and Abuse of the
World.

The destructive Tendency of a
Life of licentious Pleasure.

Of Meekness and Quietness of
Spirit.

The Rule of *Doing as we would
be done to*, explained, and re-
commended.

The Love of our Country, ex-
plained, illustrated, and in-
forced.

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By *JOHN ORR*, M. A.

Rector of *Maryborough*, in the Diocese of *Leighlin*.

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SEPT 17 1792

GEORGE

Lord Archbishop of Armagh

Primate and Metropolitan of all

IRELAND



SEPT 17 1792

As a Testimony of great Respect

Am humbly intreated

By His Grace

Most dutiful

And most obedient Servant

By JOHN O'NEILL, M.A.

JOHN O'NEILL

JOHN O'NEILL

Printed for J. O'NEILL, at the Press of the University of Dublin

To His GRACE,
G E O R G E,
Lord Archbishop of *Armagh*,
Primate and Metropolitan of all
I R E L A N D;

The following
S E R M O N S,

As a Testimony of great Respect,

Are humbly inscribed,

By His GRACE's

Most dutiful,

And most obedient Servant,

J O H N O R R.

TO HIS GRACE

THE
CONTEST

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury

Primate and Metropolitan of all

IRELAND;

We have these days seen the Lord God, and
Good Lord, the following

SERMONS

As a Testimony of the Respect

Are humbly insisted

Verily the Lord God has been seen

By His GRACE

The Lord God has been seen

Most humbly

Now we are in the Lord God, most humbly insisted

SERMONS

The Folly of the World, of the Flesh, and of the Devil

By the Lord God

The Lord God has been seen

in God

SERMONS

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S E R-

S E R M O N I.

The natural Difference between
Moral Good and Evil.

ISAIAH V. 20.

*Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and
Good Evil; that put Darknefs for Light,
and Light for Darknefs; that put Bitter
for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.*

AS the keeping the Notions of moral
Good and Evil clear and distinct
in our Minds, is the Foundation
both of just Sentiments in Speculation, and
good Practice in Life, the wise and good
Author of our Beings, has taken Care that
the doing so, should be a Matter of no
Difficulty to us; having given us an inward
Sense or Faculty, which can as readily per-
ceive and distinguish the Objects, which
are morally good or bad, as our outward

B

Senses

SERM. Senses discern their proper Objects, and

I. assure us of a Difference between any of them, and their Contraries. This is what the Prophet has intimated to us in the Text, by his representing the Men who confound the Ideas of *moral Good and Evil*, as chargeable with the same glaring Absurdity which those Persons fall into, (if any such are to be found) who put *Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness*; and who put *Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter*. As there is no Man, whose Eyes are not quite clouded or extinguished, who does not perceive the Light, and know it to be essentially different from its Opposite, Darkness; as there is none, whose Palate is not altogether obstructed and vitiated, who has not the Sensations of Sweet and Bitter, and who cannot but distinguish what is grateful and pleasing, from what is disagreeable and nauseous to his Taste; so there are none, whose Power of moral Discernment is not utterly perverted and corrupted, which it is hardly possible for it ever to be, who do not see a *Fair, and a Deformed, in the Affections and Actions of Mankind*; a *Right, and a Wrong in Life*; and who do not approve and love the one, and condemn and hate the other.

It

It is, therefore, very surprising that any SERM.
should ever have thought of denying a Dis- I.
tinction, which is so manifestly founded in
Nature, and the Truth of which is so uni-
versally attested by the Consciences of Man-
kind, which yet it is certain several, both
in ancient and late Times, have, with great
Boldness and Confidence, and with some
Art and Subtily, attempted to do. The
like Conduct, with respect to the Objects of
the external Senses; the denying the Dif-
ference between Light and Darkness; the
confounding all the various Kinds, and
Degrees of Colours, Sounds, Tastes, and
Smells, would be an Argument of the most
extravagant Madness; and the acting upon
such a Scheme must unavoidably plunge a
Man in Destruction. The denying a Dis-
tinction among moral Objects, is really
as flagrant Absurdity, and as extravagant
Folly, as the denying a Distinction among
material and sensible Things themselves;
the one is as contradictory to the inward
Convictions and Feelings of Men, as the
other is to the Notices and Informations
conveyed to them by their outward Organs;
and the acting without a Regard to the
Difference of moral Good and Evil, Virtue
and Vice, must as certainly bring upon the

SERM. Soul Ruin and Death, as the indiscriminate

I. Use of all sensible Things would draw Destruction upon the Body. Very justly, therefore, does the Prophet denounce Woe to the Men, who act a Part so perverse and unnatural! *Wo unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darknes for Light, and Light for Darknes; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.* In discoursing farther from which Words, I shall, *First*, Shew that there is a natural fixed Difference between moral Good and Evil, sufficiently clear and manifest to the moral Judgment and Conscience of every Man. *Secondly*, Inquire from whence an Attempt to confound the Notions of moral Good and Evil, and to obliterate the Impressions of Virtue and Vice in the Mind, can proceed. *Thirdly*, Consider the terrible Effects which this Attempt must have on the Minds and Happiness of Men. *Lastly*, Conclude with some useful Instructions and Inferences from the whole.

I. I shall shew that there is a natural fixed Difference between moral Good and Evil, sufficiently clear and evident to the moral Judgment and Conscience of every Man. But before I proceed to establish this

this Difference, it will be proper briefly to SERM.

consider what is to be understood by the I.

Words, *moral Good and Evil*. Good and

Evil are chiefly of two Kinds, natural and

moral. All those Things are naturally

good, which afford us agreeable Percep-

tions, which gratify any of the Senses or

Powers of receiving Pleasure in us, and

contribute, either immediately, or remotely,

to our Happiness. And on the other hand,

all those Things are naturally evil, which

excite in us painful Sensations or Ideas, and

are either directly, or indirectly, Sources of

Misery to us. Concerning the Difference

between Good and Evil of this Class, there

is no Dispute. Moral Good and Evil are

to be found only in the Dispositions and

Actions of rational Agents, and not in all

of these; for some of them partake of nei-

ther, but are, in a moral Computation, al-

together indifferent in their Nature. The

Affections and Actions of Mankind, to

which Good or Evil of the moral Kind can

be ascribed, are principally those of Them

which terminate upon other intelligent Be-

ings, and are expressive either of Respect

and Love, or of Contumacy and Ill-will to

Them; or are actually productive of Happi-

SERM. nels or Misery to Them *. The intelligent

I. Beings, to whom we are related, and towards whom we are to exercise our Affections, are chiefly God, the eternal Source of Reason and all Perfection, the infinitely wise, holy, good, and powerful Maker and Governor of all Things; and Mankind, made after the Image of God, with whom we are closely and inseparably connected, and to whom we have constant Opportunities of being useful. Now whenever we reflect either upon our own Tempers and Dispositions, or those of Others, and the Actions which flow from them, with reference either to God or Man, we always find something amiable and agreeable, and that gains our Esteem and Love; or something deformed and disagreeable, and which raises our Aversion. The Dispositions of Reverence, Love, Gratitude, and Submission towards the supreme Being, have

* Besides Affections of this Sort, it is certain, that a Desire of our own Improvement in Virtue, or of our Attainment to the true Dignity and Perfection of our Nature, appears to us to have a great deal of moral Worth and Beauty; and the Neglect of it, of Evil and Deformity. But as the Loveliness, or Deformity of these Things, does not generally strike Men so strongly and immediately, as the Goodness of Piety and Charity, and the Evil of their Contraries, I instance here chiefly in the Dispositions of Piety and Humanity, and their Opposites; and it is sufficient to the Purpose of this Discourse, to prove a Difference between them.

have ever a lovely Appearance, and are necessarily approved by us. On the contrary, a Temper of Profaneness, a Mind utterly inattentive to, and quite unaffected by the clear Instances of Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and Righteousness, appearing in the Constitution and Government of the Universe, and acting in Contradiction to the apparent Ends of the divine Administration, is a horrid and odious Object, and necessarily gives Offence and Dislike to us. The Exercise of Justice, Truth, Friendship, and Kindness to our Neighbours, a fixed Disposition and Endeavour to promote, by all Means in our Power, the universal Happiness of Mankind, are Things very beautiful and engaging, which we cannot but admire and love. And on the other Side, Injustice, Falsehood, Treachery, and Cruelty in our Dealings with Men; a Neglect of the Interest of Society, and a sacrificing of the publick Welfare to our private Views, are Things extremely base and shocking, and which must unavoidably be abhorred by us. The Eye of the Mind, our Faculty of moral Discernment, as easily perceives a Fairness and Excellence in some of these Qualities and Actions, and a Foulness and Baseness in their Opposites, as the bodily

SERM. Eye sees Beauty and Order in regular
 I. Forms, and well-proportioned Figures, and
 Unconthness and Confusion in rude Heaps,
 and monstrous Shapes.

Now that this is not a chimerical, or enthufastick Representation; but that Piety, Justice, and Charity, are really Things good and lovely in themselves, and that the opposite Dispositions have an intrinfick Evil and Deformity; that our Consciences see the essentially different Qualities of these contrary Principles, and approve, or disapprove of them, upon a simple View of their Nature, antecedently to Institution, the Appointment of Laws, and all Considerations of Advantage or Disadvantage accruing to ourselves from the Exercise of them, is the Point which I shall attempt to prove.

And the Truth of it may, certainly, be easily made out to every ingenuous Man, since he may have very clear and sufficient Evidence of it, by reflecting upon the Perceptions and Feelings of his own Mind. Let any one but confider, how he is affected towards a Man habitually actuated and governed by the Love of God and of Mankind; and another who has neither any Reverence towards God, nor Goodwill to Men; who derides and contemns every thing accounted Divine and Sacred, who

who tramples upon all the Obligations of SERM.
 Justice and Humanity, and pursues nothing I.
 but the unbounded Gratification of his private Appetites and Desires; let any one, I say, reflect upon the Sentiments and Affections which he feels towards the Men of these opposite Characters; upon the Esteem, Veneration, and Love, which he has towards the one, and the Contempt, Indignation, and Hatred which arise in him towards the other; and he must soon be convinced of a great Difference between the moral Dispositions of the Men, the Contemplation of which gives Rise to such different Perceptions and Modifications of Mind in him. As the Perceptions of the Eye are a sufficient Proof of a Distinction between Light and Darkness, and those of the Ear between Harmony and Discord, and of the Taste between Sweet and Bitter; as the Man would be reckoned quite absurd, or mad, who from the different Sensations conveyed to him by these outward Senses, would not acknowledge a Difference in the Objects which excited them: So the inward Apprehensions of the Mind, the Dictates of our moral Sense or Judgment, and the different Tempers which we feel in Ourselves upon the View of the opposite Tempers and Characters of moral
 odw Agents,

SERM. Agents, must be an incontestable Proof to

I. all attentive and impartial Persons, of a natural Difference among moral Objects. Indeed if it could be supposed, that we were deceived in this Point, where we have almost an immediate Consciousness, and intuitive View of the Truth; if our simple Perceptions and Approbations are not to be relied on, as a sufficient Evidence of the Reality and Distinction of their respective Objects, there is an End of all Knowledge, and we can be certain of nothing at all.

But however the Truth of the Distinction between moral Good and Evil, may be securely rested with candid and impartial Men upon this Evidence; yet, as it is a Matter of the greatest Consequence, we may, for the farther Illustration of it, observe, that not only the inward Sense and Feeling of Men may assure them of the Reality of this Distinction, but that a great Part of their external Conduct plainly supposes and proves It. Even They who are willing to deny or dissemble their inward Conviction, cannot help discovering by many Instances of their Behaviour, with respect both to Others and Themselves, that they see a great Difference between certain moral Qualities, and their Contraries. For, who

who even of the most profligate of Man-
kind, who, in their Talk upon the Subject,
are always ridiculing the Notions of Virtue
and Vice, do not yet, upon some Occasions,
appear to be struck with the Beauty of an
eminently good and generous character,
and shocked with the Deformity of a de-
testably vile and base one? Who of them,
out of the Heat of Dispute, and not at-
tending to Speculations, are not led by the
mere Force of Nature, to admire and praise
a Patriot, or a Person of distinguished In-
tegrity and Benevolence; and to despise
and hate a Traitor, or the Man who acts
the Villain? Who of them, that have any
Affairs to commit to the Conduct of other
Men, do not chuse for their Trustees and
Agents, Persons of approved Truth and
Honesty, rather than those who are known
to have no Principles of Justice in them?
What truly pious and righteous Man does
not express the highest Satisfaction in his
Course of Life, and appear to be habitually
full of Joy and Peace? And who of the
most vicious do not sometimes relent, are
not seen to be stung with Remorse, and to
be full of Uneasiness and Horror? Who of
those that are for confounding all moral
Ideas, do not assume to themselves the Me-
rit

I duct, and lay it as the Foundation of their claiming the Esteem and Honours of Society; while they never have the Confidence to mention their Debaucheries and Vices, (however they may sometimes boast of them in private) as the Ground of public Honour; which, yet, if there was no Difference in Nature between one Sort of moral Dispositions and another, they might with equal Justice do. In vain therefore do any pretend to deny the Distinction between moral Good and Evil, while their Behaviour, in so many Instances, confirms and ascertains it; and shews indeed, that they themselves, after all their Attempts to suppress or conceal their inward Sentiments, plainly discern it. Such is the Power of Conscience in this Case, as to extort from Men a more substantial Acknowledgment, than a mere Confession in Words, of the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, in an Exertion of those different Affections, which the Consciousness of morally good or bad Qualities in Themselves, or the View of them in Others, naturally excites; so that they cannot dispute against the Existence and Distinction of these Objects, without confuting their Arguments by

by their Practice; and laying themselves open to the Charge both of Inconsistency and Dishonesty. SERM. 1.

Besides, to give us still a stronger Conviction of the natural Difference between moral Good and Evil, discernible to the Consciences of Men, let us consider, that the Justification of our Affections and Actions necessarily depends upon this. If any one should be asked why he is better pleased with himself, or any other Man, for being affected in such a Manner, rather than another; for being, for Instance, compassionate, friendly, and generous, rather than cruel, oppressive, and tyrannical; for conceiving Indignation and Resentment against flagrant Impiety and Inhumanity, rather than for being utterly insensible with respect to these Things? He could give no Answer that would be accepted, but that the one Sort of Affections and Dispositions are amiable, worthy, and becoming a Man; and the other Sort, the reverse. If his Conduct should be arraigned or called in question, in any particular Cases, he would have no way of defending himself; but by shewing, that the Principles and Motives which he went upon, were noble and generous, and his Measures calculated for the public Good;

SERMON Good; or, at least, that his Views were in-

I. dependent, being neither injurious, nor meanly selfish, and his Actions consistent with the Rights of his Neighbours. Except he could do this, it is certain that he would never be acquitted, or excused by Mankind. So that in accounting for the Constitution of our Nature, and in vindicating ourselves from those Aspersions and Accusations which are so common in the World, we must necessarily have Recourse to our natural Notions of Good and Evil, of Excellence and Baseness in human Affections and Actions, without which nothing can be suggested upon these Points, that would be satisfying either to Ourselves or Others. The Power of the Pleader and Orator, plainly arises from these moral Perceptions.

To these Considerations, I shall only add, in the last Place, that the Truth of the Distinction between moral Good and Evil, and the Reality of our Perceptions of Virtue and Vice, appear from those ingenious imitative Arts, which give so much Pleasure and Entertainment to the Men of Taste, and polite Education. Indeed the whole Force and Effect of those Arts is owing to this Distinction, and these Perceptions. For what is there in them which has such a wonder-

wonderful Influence upon Men, which ^{serm.} raises in them such Admiration, Delight, and Transport, which gives them such Variety of lively Sentiments and strong Passions, but the Truth and Propriety of Characters and Manners, just and apt Representations of moral Beauties or Deformities, of Excellence and Worth, or of Baseness and Vileness in the Affections and Behaviour of Men? Without Representations of this kind, the Labours of the Poet, the Painter, and the Statuary, would be in a great measure lost, and none of the Productions of their Wit or Art, could make any deep and lasting Impressions; whereas moral Portraits and Descriptions most sensibly strike the Mind, awaken our Attention, and interest our Affections; and might serve instead of all other Arguments, to convince us, both of the Truth and Difference of those intellectual Images or Objects, which they bring under our View and Contemplation.

If against all This it should be objected, as it has sometimes been, that our Notions of moral Good and Evil spring not from any Principle in Nature, but from Institution, Education, Custom, Tradition, Enthusiasm, and the like; it may be answered,

SERMON answered, that the Contrary appears to be the

I. Fact, from the Universality and Uniformity of Men's Sentiments upon all the principal Branches of Morality; and from the Tempers of those who are least influenced by Instruction, and adventitious Opinions. According to all Appearances in Children, and in those Tribes and Nations of Men who are called rude and barbarous, human Nature leads directly to the Approbation and Love of what we call moral Goodness, and the Condemnation and Dislike of moral Evil; Persons of the clearest Discernment, and most free from those Prejudices and Passions, which would darken or corrupt their Minds, usually retain the deepest Impressions of moral Distinctions; and indeed there are hardly any who ever pretend an Insensibility with respect to these Distinctions, till they have visibly corrupted their Hearts, and are under the Dominion of Affections, which deprave their Judgment, and make them glad to have something to say in Excuse for their Wickedness.

If, again, it should be said, that our Ideas of moral Good and Evil depend only on positive Laws, and the arbitrary Will of a Superior; the Answer is obvious, that
many

many seem plainly to have a high Sense SERM.
of certain Points of Morality, who are but I.
rarely influenced by the Consideration of
Laws, either human or divine; and that
all of us may be conscious of moral Per-
ceptions, antecedently to all positive Con-
stitutions whatsoever; and that we have
indeed the Standard of Right and Wrong
within ourselves, by which we not only
make a moral Estimation of our own Con-
duct, but judge of the Equity or Iniquity
of the Injunctions laid upon us by those in
whose Power we are, and that unless these
Injunctions agree with our original Ideas of
Righteousness and Goodness, however we
may from political Views comply with
them, yet it is impossible to us ever to ap-
prove them, or to render a liberal and ge-
nerous Obedience to them.

If, in the last Place, it should be al-
leged, that our Notions of Morality are
derived from Interest; that we approve of
those Affections and Actions as good, which
contribute to our Advantage and Pleasure,
and disapprove of those as evil, which tend
to our Loss and Misery; it may be replied,
that it is extremely evident, that the Ground
of our Approbation, or Disapprobation of
moral Objects, is quite different from In-

C

terest;

SERM. tereft; because we find we have as strong

I. a Sense of the Worth or Baseness of those Actions, which affect only the Happiness of others, as we have of the Worth or Baseness of those which affect our own: Nay, that we must frequently approve and admire Actions, which tend to our particular Loss; and disapprove and detest others, which are highly beneficial to us. Our Conscience, or moral Judgment of Good and Evil, is not to be bribed into an Esteem of the Conduct of Men, by any Considerations of private Gain. It may indeed be deceived by a false Shew of Goodness; but sincere Piety, Justice, and Humanity, and a Desire of improving ourselves still more in these excellent Qualities, are the only Things which it can regard, as morally worthy or virtuous; as the Contrary are uniformly condemned by it, as evil or vicious.

II. I proceed now to inquire, from whence an Attempt to confound the Notions of moral Good and Evil, and to obliterate the Impressions of Virtue and Vice in the Mind, can proceed? And here it must be observed, that this Inquiry relates, not to the Principles and Motives of the Persons

Persons, who may advance Speculations SERM.
 and Hypotheses, which in their Confe- II
 quences, destroy the natural Difference be-
 tween moral Good and Evil, but who do
 not see, nor would stand by any such Con-
 sequences of their Doctrine; but to the
 Springs of those Men's Conduct, who pro-
 fessedly deny the Distinction, who avow-
 edly dispute and argue against it, and re-
 joice in the Thoughts of having made out
 the Conclusion. And as to the Attempts
 of such, it seems very plain that they can
 be resolved into nothing, but *gross Prepos-
 session, and obstinate Prejudice*. And it is not
 difficult to see how Men may come to be
 so much prejudiced in this Matter: For
 our Sense of moral Good and Evil, our na-
 tural Judgment of Right and Wrong, being
 the Origin of all moral Obligations; Men
 who will not be kept within the Bounds of
 their Duty, must be fond above all Things,
 to bear down this Faculty, or to persuade
 themselves that its Dictates are mere Chi-
 meras. This, they will see, is the only
 Foundation upon which they can hope for
 any settled Rest and Peace, while they con-
 tinue in their evil Courses. For if it were
 possible to them, (which, certainly, may
 well be doubted) to throw off entirely the

SERM. Principles of Religion, and to become the

I greatest Sceptics, or even confirmed Infidels as to the Existence of a Deity, all that they would gain by bringing themselves into this unnatural and shocking State of Mind, would only be to release themselves from the strongest additional Ties and Motives to the Exercise of moral Virtue: While their natural Conscience, or the moral Judgment of their Minds, continued to exert itself with any Vigour, and pointed out to them the Things that are good or evil, the primary Obligations of Morality would still remain, and they would feel themselves to be under the Power of them; the Consciousness of which would necessarily gall and fret them, and give them frequent Touches of Remorse and Uneasiness. It is therefore the Interest of Men, resolved upon a profligate and libertine Life, to stifle and suppress the Voice of Conscience, and to treat all its Decisions as groundless Fancies and Illusions. And here, whatever Exceptions are, perhaps, to be made as to some few, who from mere Vanity, and an Affectation of *thinking boldly*, dispute against the Truth and Distinction of our Ideas of Virtue and Vice, we certainly have the most universal Source of the Opposition which

which is made to these Notions: The SERM.
 Persons who *hate to be reformed*, must nat- I.
 urally hate the Principles, which, if ad-
 mitted to be true, would restrain and check
 them in their vicious Pursuits, and be the
 constant Reproach and Condemnation of
 their Conduct. They, therefore, set them-
 selves to ridicule the Notions of moral Good
 and Evil, and have recourse to every Sub-
 tility which they can invent, to shew that
 they have no Foundation in Nature; and
 use every Art in their Power, to suppress
 or extirpate the Sense or Faculty which
 suggests them. And though they must many
 times unavoidably feel, that their Efforts
 of this kind are vain, (moral Perceptions
 being so essential to their Constitution, and
 so deeply planted in it, that after all that
 can be done to eradicate them, they are
 still ready to shoot out and grow again)
 yet as they fancy themselves to be more
 free and easy, in proportion to the Progress
 which they make in stifling and laying
 waste their Consciences, they renew and
 continue their Attempts to oppress and de-
 stroy them. Now that strong Prejudice,
 arising from the Prevalence of some un-
 manly, or evil Passion, and for the most
 part from a deep Corruption of Heart, is

SERM. the true Cause of Men's Enmity to the

I. *Notions of moral Good and Evil, cannot be doubted, if we consider, that these Notions are really congenial with the human Mind, springing up as certainly and uniformly in it as its Faculties open and unfold, as any Sensations and Affections arise in it at the proper Time of their Appearance; and that all those Men, who can least be suspected of having a Bias on their Minds, have ever the most sensible Conviction of the Truth of these Ideas; and that there are but very few who deny the Certainty of them, who are not openly as averse to the Duties of Morality in Practice, as they are to these fundamental Principles of it in Speculation. In this Case, therefore, of expunging the Ideas, and exploding the Distinction of Virtue and Vice, above all others, the Reason which our Saviour gives for the Infidelity of Men, holds good; that*

John iii. 19, 20. *they love Darknefs rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil; that they hate the Light, neither come to the Light, lest their Deeds should be reprov'd.*

III. I shall now briefly represent the terrible Effects which this Attempt to confound or extinguish the Notions of moral Good

Good and Evil, must have on the Minds SERM.
and Happiness of Men. As this Attempt I.
always arises from some great Disorder in
the Mind, so it extremely heightens that
Disorder; and indeed throws the Mind
into the most unnatural, perverted, and
wretched State that can be. The Sound-
ness, Health, and Vigour, the Harmony,
Perfection, and Happiness of the human
Soul, consist in a just Arrangement of its se-
veral Powers and Affections, in a due Sub-
ordination and Subjection of its inferior
Principles and Movements to the guiding
and governing Power, or Faculty in it, *a*
well informed Conscience, or a rightly culti-
ivated moral Sense. When our moral Judg-
ment, or the Principle of Conscience stea-
dily presides and governs in the Mind;
when its Dictates are the Rule or Law, ac-
cording to which, all Our Appetites, Pas-
sions, and Affections operate; our inward
Man is healthy and strong; our Souls ex-
ert themselves according to the Intention
and Order of Nature, and we make a de-
cent and amiable Appearance among ratio-
nal Beings, in proportion to our Capacity
and Rank in the Creation, and at the same
time enjoy the most noble and manly Plea-
sures, and indeed the most valuable Hap-
piness

S E R M. *pineness which our Nature will admit of. But*

I. *the smallest Breach made in this Constitution of the Soul, by the Rebellion of the lower Principles in any Instance, against the Direction of the supreme Faculty, always introduces some Irregularity and Confusion into it, and, in some Degree, spoils its Beauty and Perfection, and interrupts its Ease and Tranquillity: Greater Violations of this Constitution, by the habitual Indulgence of evil Passions, in Opposition to the plain Decisions, and repeated Remonstrances and Admonitions of Conscience, bring upon the Mind proportionably greater Disorders and Deformities, and exceedingly encrease its Uneasiness and Pain: And the greatest Subversion of this Constitution, by endeavouring to extinguish the very Light of Conscience itself, to extirpate our Sense, or to confound, or corrupt our Notions of moral Good and Evil, must necessarily put the Mind into a State of the highest Disorder, Depravation, and Misery that can be imagined. For when thus the Guide of Life is blinded or seduced, and all Rule and Government in the Soul is destroyed, a Man becomes a Prey to every wild Desire and Passion which arises in him, the Consequences of which must be the utter Desolation*

solation and Ruin of the Mind; the strip- SERM.
ping it of every fair and lovely Affection, I.
and filling it with Qualities of a deformed
and horrid Aspect; the depriving it of all
rational Enjoyments, and instead of these,
the raising in it Tumults, Dissonancies, and
Distractions; Racks and Tortures, from
the Fermentation of unnatural Passions, and
the Cravings of Appetites never to be sa-
tisfied; and, in some calm Intervals, Re-
morse and Anguish, Alarms and Terrors
of Conscience, gloomy Apprehensions, and
dismal Forebodings of *the Wrath to come*;
the rendering it feeble and impotent to all
that is Manly or Good; and the reducing
it to a State of Slavery, Sicknes, Death.
All those dreadful Effects, an Attempt to
fifle, confound, or corrupt the Dictates of
Conscience, concerning the Objects that
are morally Good or Evil, must as cer-
tainly produce in the Soul, so far as it
succeeds; as the Eating of Poison, or the
Wounding of any vital Part, must bring
Pains, Convulsions, Agonies, Weakness,
Languishing, and Dissolution on the Body.
So that what our Saviour said of the Effect
of Rejecting his Doctrine, may most justly
be applied to the Consequences of denying
or rejecting the Doctrine concerning the
Certainty

SERM. Certainty and Difference of moral Good and

I. Evil; that *on whomsoever they shall fall, they will grind him to Powder.*

Matt. xxi.

44-

It remains, that I conclude with some useful Instructions and Inferences from the Whole.

1. We may see the great Goodness of God, in endowing us with a natural Discernment and Approbation of our Duty. Moral Good is the Substance of all human Duty; there is nothing either in Morality or Religion, which is not a Part of it, or ultimately referred to it, and intended for securing and establishing more effectually the Practice of it. Now as the Author of our Beings has interwoven the Knowledge and Love of this, in our very Frame and Make; as he has made it impossible to us to exercise our Faculties according to the Order of Nature, without being struck with a Sense and Admiration of moral Goodness, he has evidently been very indulgent and kind to us, and greatly consulted our Ease and Pleasure in the Service and Obedience which he demands from us. There is no need of any laborious Researches, to

inform ourselves of what is good, and what the Lord requires from us; the Word of Instruction is near us, even in our Hearts,

and

Micah vi.
8.

Deut. xxx.
14.

and in our Consciences; so that by consulting our own Minds, by attending to the Dictates of our inward Guide and Monitor, we may easily perceive, at least, all the great Lines of our Duty: Nor will there be any Difficulty, if we do not voluntarily corrupt ourselves, in the Performance of our Duty. Virtue is far from being, as it has too often been represented, a Struggle with Nature, or a Constraint on its Desires and Affections: This is only the Reproach and Calumny which has been weakly, or wickedly, thrown upon it, by Persons judging of the natural Condition of Mankind, from what they observe to be the State of Sinners, endeavouring to recover themselves from the Power of habitual Debaucheries and Immoralities. On the contrary, Light is not more pleasant to the Eyes, than Virtue is agreeable to the uncorrupted human Mind; there is an Amiability and Resplendency in it, which, while we are unprejudiced, never fails to command the highest Esteem and Veneration of our Consciences, and most powerfully to attract and engage our Affection. As God, therefore, has laid so good a Foundation in the Constitution of our Beings, for our coming both to the Knowledge and

Practice

SERM. Practice of the great Duties which he has

I required from us, it is plain that he is far from being a hard Master, or a tyrannical Governor; but that he has indeed proved himself our gracious Father in the Laws which he has prescribed to us, as well as in all his other Dispensations towards us; having exacted nothing from us, but what he has given us very sufficient Power to do, nothing almost indeed, but what we must have done, if we were led by our natural Principles and Dispositions, though it had never been commanded by his supreme Authority.

2. From what hath been said, we may see the Foundation of the Rewardableness of Virtue, and of those joyful Hopes which naturally spring from it. Virtue is a Thing which hath an inherent Excellence and Worth, which every Mind that can form an Idea of it, must greatly respect, honour, and love. There is no Man, who is conscious of partaking of it in a high Degree, who does not delight in his own Nature, and who has not the most agreeable Relish of the Dignity which it confers on him; and there is none, who observes it eminently possessed by others, who does not reverence them upon the account of it, and who

who is not most truly disposed to contribute SERM.
to their Happiness, if he gives way to his II
natural Principles and Passions. And as
the Deity, who has planted this noble and
generous Sense of the Beauty and Merit
of Virtue in the human Mind, must have
an inconceivably higher Perception of the
Loveliness and Worth of it himself, we
may conclude that it is an Object which
will always meet with his Approbation,
that he will ever patronize the Cause of it,
and that its Interests will flourish under his
Administration to all Eternity.

3. We may here likewise see the Inex-
cusableness and ill Desert of all gross, or
wilful Immorality. It is impossible to a
Man to allow himself in any Instances of
flagrant Vice, or in any Degree of wilful
Sin, without a plain Violation of the Law
of his Nature, without offending and shock-
ing his Mind, and exposing himself to the
Disapprobation, Reproofs, and Stings of
his own Conscience; and without being
sensible at the same Time of doing what
must raise Displeasure and Indignation a-
gainst him in every intelligent and moral
Being, who is acquainted with the Naugh-
tiness and Depravity of his Heart. We
may indeed be chargeable with several
Omissions

SERM. Omissions of Duty, and positive Transgres-

I. sions of the Law of our Minds, which proceeding only from Ignorance, Inadvertence, or Surprise, will give us no great Uneasiness or Disturbance within: But as for all gross Enormities, which contradict and bear down the clearest Suggestions of Conscience, and all known Sins, it is plainly as impossible to us to commit these, without accusing, condemning, and disliking Ourselves, upon the Account of them, as it is to tear our Flesh without feeling Pain, or to swallow a bitter Potion and not to have an ungrateful Relish. An inward Disturbance, Restlessness, and Confusion, Remorse and Displacency with ourselves, and Fear of superior Powers, are the unavoidable Consequences of conscious Wickedness, at least upon some Occasions, from the very Nature and Frame of our Souls. In vain, therefore, do Sinners attempt to shift off Guilt, and to free themselves from Blame, by any Sophistry, Artifice, or Colouring whatsoever. And in vain do they flatter themselves with the Hope of escaping the Judgment of God, if a sincere Repentance does not prevent its overtaking them. After all that they can alledge in their own Justification, or Defence, they
need

need only look within themselves, in a so-
S E R M O N
rious Hour, to be assured, that there is
I
something very base, unworthy, and hate-
ful in them; that they carry an Accuser
and Avenger in Their Breasts, which chal-
lenges and upbraids them for their evil
Deeds; which both punishes them in this
World, and gives them terrifying Presages
of a severer Punishment which is to fall
upon them in a World to come. Indeed
the Judgment which they pass upon them-
selves, naturally prepares the Way for their
falling under the Condemnation of God:
Out of their own Consciences will the Go-
vernor of the World convict, and judge
them; nor will they be able to offer any
Plea to stop his Proceedings, or have the
least Reason to complain of not receiving
Forgiveness from him, while they are in
a State, in which they cannot obtain it
from Themselves.

4. Let us take our natural Sense of mo-
ral Good and Evil, as our Guide in all our
Inquiries about Religion. As this is the
original Light which the Author of Nature
has kindled up in our Minds, for pointing
out to us the Way of Virtue and Happiness;
as all the Notices which he otherwise con-
veys to us, are only supplemental to, and
in

SERMON. In Aid of this, we should in all our Speculations and Reasonings on religious and moral Subjects, have Recourse to this our first and principal Source of Instruction and Information, and make the Sentiments which we derive from hence, a Rule or Standard for determining the Truth or Falsehood of all Doctrines and Opinions in Points of Religion and Morality. This is one of the best Methods that we can take, for guarding against Deception, and arriving at the Knowledge of the Truth, in Matters of the greatest Consequence. Whatever Notions and Opinions agree with our natural Sentiments of moral Piety and Virtue, or tend to support, strengthen, and improve these Sentiments, have the Characters of Truth and Goodness upon them, and are evidently worthy of proceeding from the Fountain of Light and Love. Whatever Doctrines, on the contrary, obscure, or extinguish our natural Light; whatever Notions corrupt or deface, confound or perplex the Dictates of our Consciences concerning Virtue and Vice, must certainly be false, and cannot have God for their Author, who can never be supposed to make any After-discoveries to us, which would be inconsistent with the Truths or Notices which he wrote

wrote in our Hearts, at the time of our Creation. Proceeding by this Rule, we shall soon acquiesce in all the genuine Doctrines, both of natural Religion, and of Christianity, which presuppose and recognize the essential Difference between moral Good and Evil, which give us the strongest Impressions of the Dignity and Importance of Virtue, and of the Baseness and evil Consequences of Vice, and furnish us with the most powerful Motives to abound in the One, and to keep at the utmost Distance from the Other; while, at the same Time, we shall reject all Opinions, which either directly attack the Cause of Virtue, or in their Consequences undermine it; which would persuade us that there is nothing really generous, or worthy of Esteem in human Nature, but that our most plausible Actions flow only from Custom, Fancy, Policy, Fear, or some meanly selfish Principle; which lay the Stress of Religion, and the Salvation of Men, not on the Practice of the moral Duties of Piety, Righteousness, and Charity, but on something different from it, or opposite to it; on outward Forms and Rites, or inward Heats and Raptures; on mere Belief and speculative Notions, and a presumptuous Reliance on

SERMON. the Mercies of God, and Merits of Christ;

I. on a Zeal against Error, and hating, reviling, damning, persecuting, and extirpating all who happen to be reputed Hereticks and Enemies to the Cause of God, though very probably many of them are among the worthiest and best upon Earth. Of the utter Absurdity of all Opinions of this Sort, we may have a Demonstration in the natural Convictions and Feelings of our Minds, and if we are but true to Ourselves, and make a proper and becoming Use of the Powers and Faculties which the Author of our Beings has given us, it is impossible that we should ever be induced, upon any Pretences, either of Reason, or Authority, to assent to them.

5. Let our Sense of moral Good and Evil, likewise guide and govern our Practice and Conversation in the World. The End for which it was implanted in us, was not only to instruct us in our Duty, but to oblige and prompt us to do it; and if we will but keep it pure and lively, and submit to its Direction and Influence, we shall find it a very sure and effectual Principle of all Piety and Goodness in us. The Principle of natural Conscience alone, in all ordinary Cases, and common Occurrences of Life,

Life, can both give us a clear and immediate Notice of our Duty, and enable us with Ease and Pleasure to perform it, and in complicated Cases, where Deliberation and Reasoning may be wanted to discern the honest, the worthy, and generous Part, and to fix on the proper Methods of conducting ourselves; and where Strength of Mind may be necessary to adhere to our Resolutions; the steady Influence of this Principle; is the best Security both for our judging truly, and acting with Vigour in Pursuance of the Determinations which we come to. Indeed, if we duly cultivate this Principle; if we improve and strengthen our natural Sense of moral Good and Evil, by complying with its Dictates, and calling to its Assistance, Reason, and the Principles of Religion, it will be a constant and ready Defence to us against all Temptations to Vice, will inspire us with the noblest Sentiments and Affections, fill us with such an Ardour in the Practice of Virtue as will surmount all Opposition, and raise us to such Perfection in it, as will do Honour to our Nature, and make our Life a Pleasure to ourselves, and a Blessing to all around us.

SERM.

6. Lastly, Let us carefully guard against

I.

every thing, that would confound, darken, or corrupt our Notions of moral Good and Evil; particularly against the Prevalence of evil Passions in our Hearts, which lie at the Bottom of all Cavils against the natural Distinction of Virtue and Vice; these, on Account of their Tendency to pervert our Judgment in the most important Points, as well as for many other Reasons, ought to be immediately checked and suppressed. Let us likewise guard against superstitious and enthusiastic Opinions in Religion, than which, if they become extravagant, nothing will be more destructive to the Mind, and more effectually subvert and corrupt all our natural Sentiments and Principles: Against these we should defend Ourselves, by a free Use of our Reason, for acquiring just Notions of God, and the Service which Mankind naturally owe to him; and by a diligent and impartial Study of the Scriptures, for acquainting Ourselves farther with his Will, and particularly for knowing what those Duties are, which depend purely on positive Institution. And, in the last Place, let us beware of refining too nicely on Points of Morality, a Thing, which many, who can find no Shelter in the Absurdities of



Superstition and Enthusiasm, fly to; and which, under a Pretence of explaining and stating their Duty more precisely, gives them often an Opportunity of evading it, and reconciles them to Practices, quite repugnant to the Sense and Feeling of every plain common Man, and which, without such Artifice, would never sit easy on their own Minds. Against this Self-delusion we should take Precautions, by hearkening gladly to the natural Voice of our Consciences, which in most Cases will be a sure Direction to us; and by accustoming Ourselves to Deliberation, wherever the least Doubt arises, as to the Goodness of the Actions which we are about to do, and forbearing to act, till we are satisfied that our Conduct will at least be consistent with the general Principles of our moral Approbations; and by considering the Folly of deceiving Ourselves in Matters of this Nature; that all that we gain by it, is only a little present Ease in some unmanly Gratifications, and that at last it must issue in our utter Confusion and Misery. The Necessity of thus stopping up the several Sources, from whence the Blindness or Depravation of our Minds can proceed; of guarding against whatever would extinguish, impair, or corrupt our

SERM. natural Notions of Morality, is abundantly

I. evident, from the Consideration of the dismal Consequences of Suffering these Notions to be obscured or defaced in us: As our moral Judgment is the Light and Director of our Life, if this be prejudiced, seduced, or debauched, the Foundation of a good Conduct is subverted, the very Fountain and Principle of Virtue is obstructed, or poison'd within us; so that nothing excellent and becoming our Nature is to be expected from us, but we must necessarily fall into a State of the grossest Error and

Wickedness. *If the Light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is that Darkness!*

Mat. vi.

33.

SERMON

SERM. Natural Notions of Morality, is abundantly

evident, from the Consideration of the di-

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S E R M O N II.

The Efficacy of Religious Faith.

H E B. X. 38.

Now the Just shall live by Faith.

AS Mankind are formed with a Power S E R M.
or Faculty, which furnishes them II.
with such Notices and Impressions

of moral Good and Evil, that they must necessarily approve and love the One, and condemn and hate the Other; They are, by the very Constitution of their Nature, subject to the Law of Virtue and Morality. This Sense of Virtue and Vice, which is born with us, and which is so interwoven in our Frame and Make, that our Beings must be extinguished, before it can be totally lost, is the first and great Source of all moral Obligations; which both gives us a Conviction of our Duty, and urges us to perform it, antecedently to the Appoint-

SERM. ment of positive Laws, and to all Consideration of the Benefits which will redound to ourselves from the Performance of it: And in Fact, This Sense, or Power, of all the Principles in our Nature, has always the greatest Influence in producing that Degree of Virtue and Goodness, which is to be found among Mankind. But as there is a great Variety of Principles in human Nature, some of which, from the want of due Government, interfere in their Operation, with our Sense of *Right and Wrong*, and sometimes grow strong enough to impair, controul, and overcome it, it is necessary for maintaining the just Prerogative of this Principle, and establishing it, according to its Dignity and Rank, in the supreme Command in the Mind, that it be cherished, improved, and invigorated, not only by an habitual Compliance with its Directions, but by calling to its Aid, all the Principles, which can yield it any Support and Assistance. Among the several Principles, which improve and strengthen our Perceptions of moral Good and Evil, and give them a greater Force and Efficacy upon our Conduct, That of a Religious Faith is of the first Consideration and Importance. By this I understand a firm Belief,

lief, or Persuasion of the Existence and Per-
fections of God, and of a future State of
Rewards and Punishments. This is the
Faith which the Apostle mentions in the
Text, as the animating Principle of a good
Man's Life, and the great Support of his
Virtue in Times of Distress; for in the first
Verse of the following Chapter, he informs
us that the Faith which he speaks of, is
the Substance, or rather, a substantial and
well-grounded Expectation of Things hoped
for, the Evidence of Things not seen; and
what those Things are, which, though not
perceived by our outward Senses, are yet
the Objects of our Faith, he explains par-
ticularly at the sixth Verse, telling us that
They are the Being of God, and the Re-
wards of another World. *But without
Faith it is impossible to please him; for he
that cometh to God, must believe that he is,
and that he is the Rewarder of them that
diligently seek him.* It is not my Intention
at present, to enter into the Proofs, either
of the Existence of a Deity, or of the Cer-
tainty of a future State. The first is so
loudly and fully declared by the Voice of
universal Nature, that the Man must be
stupidly inattentive, or obstinately prejudi-
ced, who does not admit and acknowledge
it.

And the latter Principle has so close a
 III. Connexion with the first, and is so proba-
 ble from the very Nature of the human
 Soul, and so necessary to be admitted for
 the Order of the Universe, besides its re-
 ceiving the strongest Confirmation from the
 Revelation of Christianity, that there can
 hardly be any Person of tolerable Reflection
 and Seriousness of Mind, who will not
 easily believe it. At least none who receive
 the Gospel, will have any Doubts of the
 Truth of it at all. Supposing, therefore,
 the Existence of God, and a future State of
 Rewards and Punishments, to be received
 and acknowledged Principles, what I pro-
 pose, in the following Part of this Dis-
 course, is to shew that our Belief of these
 Points, coincides and co-operates with our
 natural Sense of moral Good and Evil; that
 it always puts Life and Vigour into our
 Perceptions of Virtue, and proves the great,
 or the only Support of the Integrity of
 Men in several Circumstances in which they
 may happen to be. And after this, to make
 some useful Reflections upon the Subject.
 That our Faith of a Deity and a future
 Life, falls in with our natural Notions of
 of Virtue and Vice, and conspires to pro-
 duce the same Conduct in us, which the

original Light of our Consciences, directs *Sermon*,
and guides us to, will be exceedingly evi- *III.*
dent, if we attend to the true Notion of
God, and a future State. According to
any rational Opinion which we can form
of the Deity, he is a Being possessed not
only of every natural Power and Perfection,
but of all moral Excellencies: He is
not only infinite, eternal, omniscient, and
almighty, but perfectly holy, righteous, and
good; he not only made the World, and
preserves it by a constant Exertion of his
Power, but exercises a most wise, just, and
good Dominion over it; particularly he is
to be considered, not only as the natural,
but as the moral Governor of Mankind,
who observes their Conduct as rational and
moral Agents, and approves their Virtue,
and is displeased with their Wickedness;
and who in Consequence of this, makes
their Happiness or Misery to depend, in a
great Measure, upon their good, or bad
Behaviour, even in this World; and will
make them to do so, much more remarka-
bly in the next. For as to a future State;
according to the Notices which both Reason
and Revelation give of it, it is to be con-
sidered as a State of equal Retribution, in
which, Every one shall reap what he has
sown. *Gal. iv. 7.*
here

SERM. *here sowed*; in which, the Men who have
 II  duly cultivated their intellectual and moral
 Powers, and improved themselves in all
 virtuous Qualities, shall receive the Fruits
 of their Improvements, in an Increase of
 their Knowledge and Virtue, in the most
 delightful Sense of the Approbation and
 Favour of their Creator, and in an Advance-
 ment to a State of the highest Dignity,
 Honour, and Joy; and those who have
 abused and corrupted the noble Faculties
 and Affections of their Nature, and con-
 tracted Habits of Vice, shall be condemned
 and rejected by God, and sink into extreme
 Baseness, Disgrace, and Misery.

Now these being the just Notions of a
 Deity, and of a future Life, it must be
 very easy to see, that the Belief of the Ex-
 istence of God, and the Expectation of a
 future State, coincide directly with our na-
 tural Perceptions of moral Good and Evil,
 that they greatly support, confirm, and en-
 liven these Perceptions, and most power-
 fully urge us to the same Behaviour and
 Measures in Life, which our Consciences
 approve, and prompt us to pursue.

Our Nature is, indeed, so well formed
 for the Practice of Virtue; we have such a
 quick Sense of its Dignity and Excellence,
 and

and we have Propensions and Affections SERM.
which lead us so strongly to the Actions II.

which our Minds approve, that very often in pursuance of the generous Dispositions of our Hearts, and the inward Sense of our Minds, or the natural Dictates of our Consciences, concerning the Good or Evil, the Excellence or Baseness of our Conduct, without any direct or immediate Consideration of God, or a future Existence, we acquit ourselves in our Conversation and Intercourse in the World, very worthily and honourably. This is what must be easily allowed by Every One, who has made any Reflections on himself, or any Observations on the Temper and Behaviour of Other Men. But when besides our having a just Sense of the Worth and Loveliness of Virtue, we have likewise a lively Persuasion that we are always acting under the Eye of a Being, infinite in Power, Wisdom, Purity, and Goodness, who is our Creator and righteous Governor, who knows all our Actions, and the most secret Inclinations of our Hearts, and can approve of nothing in us but true Integrity and Goodness, and who hates all Iniquity and Vice; when we firmly believe that this Being is the Patron of Virtue, and the Enemy of Vice even in
this

SERM. this World, and that he will render the

II. Cause of the one for ever glorious and triumphant, and that of the other utterly contemptible and miserable in the next; surely with this Persuasion and Faith, we shall proceed with the most active Zeal and Diligence in the Ways of Righteousness. In contemplating the Scene which this Belief opens up to us, we shall find many of the most prevalent Principles in our Nature most sensibly touched and moved, and exciting us strongly to improve ourselves in all morally good Qualities, such as our *Love of Virtue itself*, which cannot but make us, with great Ardour, to aspire to that State, in which we shall with the utmost Freedom and Vigour exert our generous Affections, and make a continual Progress in those Excellencies, which will tend to the everlasting Dignity and Perfection of our Nature; our *Desire of Esteem and Honour*, which can by no means be so effectually gratified, as by the Approbation of that Being, who has the Standard of Worth and Excellence in himself, and is *the God of Knowledge*, by whom *Actions and Characters* are impartially weighed; and the Congratulations which we shall receive in a Society of Spirits, free from those Prejudices

1 Sam. ii. 3.

deeds which so miserably darken and corrupt the Minds of poor Mortals, and who will judge of us according to our real Deserts: Our *Desire of Pleasure and Happiness* also, which can no way be so well provided for, as by the Gratifications which the Exercise of good Affections, and the Consciousness of Merit immediately afford, and by securing the Protection of the Government of the World in this Life, and entitling ourselves to the Rewards, which he has prepared for his faithful Servants in the next: Likewise our *Aversion to Shame*, the Sense of which must operate most intensely in the Presence of God, and the several Orders of superior Beings in the other World; and, lastly, our *Fear of Misery*, which, if we desert the Interests of Virtue, we have reason to apprehend will overtake us under the present Administration of Providence; and which, without Amendment, must certainly be our Portion, most dreadfully, in a future State. In a word, a steady and lively Faith of these great Principles of Religion, concerning the Existence of God, and the Certainty of a future Life, will both co-operate directly with our natural Sense and Love of Virtue, and raise and invigorate such Sentiments and Dispositions

in

SERM. in us, as will guard and support us in the

II. Practice of Virtue in all Events, and enable us to make Advances in it, as much beyond what we should have made without its Influence and Assistance, as a Body in Motion will be accelerated, by a new Force impressed on it, in the same Direction, equal, or superior to That, with which it proceeded before.

The Efficacy of this Belief on all, in whom it is firm and lively, must be very considerable at all Times; but the Use and Importance of it, will be best understood, by considering how it operates in certain Cases, where, without its Assistance, we should be very cool in the Cause of Virtue, or in great Danger of deserting, and apostatising entirely from it.

First, There is hardly any Man of Reflection, who must not experience a great Inequality of Temper in himself, with respect to almost all the Objects presented to his Mind. The noblest and best do not always appear in the same Light to him, nor strike and move him at some Times, as they do at Others. Virtue itself, the fairest of all intellectual Beauties, has, by no Means, an uniform Influence on Persons even of good Dispositions: Notwithstanding

ing its intrinsic Charms are invariably the same, yet as our Faculties cannot at all times behold them with the same Steadiness and Attention, the Impressions which they make on us, are not always equally strong and attractive. On the contrary, our Taste of moral Beauty and Excellence is apt sometimes to grow flat, and our Desires of it to cool and languish; and while this is our Temper, we shall at least make no Progress towards Perfection, if we are even able to maintain our Ground, and escape from the Infection of Vice. Now to correct this Insensibility and Indolence of Mind, which the best of us sometimes fall into with respect to Virtue, to revive and quicken our Perceptions of moral Goodness, and to inspire us with Ardour and Zeal in Well-doing, it must be of great Use to reflect that our Approbation of Virtue, is agreeable to the Approbation of God himself, and will be finally justified by his unerring Sentence; that the Course of Life which the generous Sentiments and Affections of our Nature direct and excite us to, not only contributes to our present Dignity and Felicity, but lays the Foundation for our attaining to Every thing that is lovely, honourable, and joyful for Ever. This

E

Per-

SERM. Persuasion firmly rooted in the Mind, and
 II. frequently recalled, and rendered habitual
 to it, must effectually awaken and invigo-
 rate our natural Sense of moral Excellence,
 cure us of our Sloth and Indifference in the
 Practice of Virtue, and make us exert our
 utmost Endeavours to abound and excel in
 all Goodness.

Another Case, wherein the great Impor-
 tance of the Belief of the Existence of God,
 and the Truth of a future State may be
 seen, is that of the Recovery of the dege-
 nerate and corrupted Part of Mankind to a
 State of Virtue and Goodness. Tho' the
 Faculty of discerning moral Good and Evil
 be essential to our Constitution, and is ne-
 ver to be intirely suppressed, or lost in us;
 yet when we give way for a long time to
 evil Desires and Passions, and contract in-
 veterate Customs of Vice, we necessarily
 impair and corrupt this Faculty, and dimi-
 nish its Influence and Authority so much,
 as to render it quite insufficient for effecting
 our Amendment and Reformation. Speak
 to a Man deeply corrupted, who is under
 the Power of strong Lusts, and confirmed
 Habits of Wickedness, of the Loveliness
 and Merit of moral Virtue; paint its
 Charms in the most lively Colours; and
 represent

represent the Deformity and Odiousness of the Vices to which he is addicted; in the strongest Light to him; and you will soon find that he will be but little touched, or moved with such Objects; that his Relish of moral Beauty is so much Spoiled and vitiated, that any View that can be given him of it, will make but a very weak Impression, and produce no great or lasting Effect in him. So that if he is ever to be reclaimed, he must be taken hold on by some other Principle, than his Approbation, or Desire of Virtue itself. And as the Fear of Misery, and the Desire of Happiness, will most probably be the strongest Principles in his Mind, a Persuasion that the Course in which he is engaged, will deprive him of the highest Good, and plunge him in the most dismal Ruin, must have the greatest Force for awakening and alarming him. This Persuasion, or Belief, if it can be well fixed in his Mind, will, if any thing at All will, restrain and check him in his evil Course. And though, it is certain, that the abstaining from Vice through mere Fear, or Terror, has no Merit, yet it is of great Use to stop a Man in the Career of his Wickedness, even by this Consideration; because by this Means he gets an

SERMON. Opportunity for Recollection, and Reflect-

II. ing upon his own State. And if once he becomes serious and thoughtful, it may be expected that the Principle of Conscience will in time revive, and recover its Authority in him; that he will, by Degrees, be conceiving a Hatred of Vice, and a Love of Virtue, upon a View of their respective Natures; and will at last perform his Duty, from the ingenuous Principles of Approbation and Affection. And thus, *the Fear of God, as the Son of Syrach speaks, may be the beginning of his Love, and Faith the beginning of cleaving to him.*

Ecclus.
xxv. 12.

Again, the great Use of a firm and lively Faith of the Being of God, and a future State, is very apparent in the Case of Men's falling under strong Temptations to commit any Acts of Wickedness. This is well known to be a Case incident to all Men, none being so great and good, as not to be sometimes exposed to Temptations, by which their Virtue is endangered, or by which they may very possibly be surprized, and overcome. It must, therefore, be of vast Consequence, even to Those, who have the most quick natural Sense of all moral Obligations, to have some Principle in their Minds, which may support and animate their

their Notions of Virtue, which may even strike them with some Fear and Awe, and prevent their Falling, or Stumbling, in such critical and dangerous Circumstances. And what will better support and secure them, and make them more afraid of yielding to Temptations, and more resolute in repelling them, than a deep and strong Conviction of their being always in the View of a supreme Governor and Judge, whose Approbation and Favour, which are of infinite Moment to them, depend intirely on their good Behaviour, and whom they are bound, not only in Point of Interest, but by all the Ties of Duty and Gratitude to obey; and an habitual lively Persuasion that this Life is a State of Preparation and Discipline for Eternity, so that one false Step taken by them at present, may draw on their everlasting Ruin, whereas by bearing up bravely against Temptations, and maintaining an inflexible Integrity, they acquire such a strong and confirmed Temper of Virtue, as will endure for ever, and be an eternal Source of the highest Honour and Delight to them. This Persuasion well laid in the Mind, must have a most happy Influence for guarding our Virtue, and insuring our Steadiness in our Duty, in those

SERMON. trying and hazardous Situations, in which,

II.

in the ordinary Course of the World, we shall, notwithstanding the greatest Caution that we can use, be sometimes placed. Of the great Efficacy of such a Religious Faith, to fortify the Mind against the Power of Temptation, we have a remarkable Instance in the History of Joseph. That excellent Person, indeed, had a just Sense and Detestation of the Crime to which he was solicited, from a Consideration of its intrinsic Baseness and Vileness; but that which confirmed him in the Resolution of preserving his Innocence, and made him to triumph easily over the Temptation, was the Conviction which he had, that a Compliance with it would have been a most grievous Offence against God. *Here, said*

Gen. xix.

9.

he, can I do this great Wickedness, and Sin against God?

Lastly, the vast Importance of a lively Faith in God, and a confident Expectation of a future State, is extremely evident in the Case of a Man's Falling into any deep Distress, or his Suffering Persecution for the Sake of Righteousness. In the calm and smooth Scenes of Life, a Man who has a clear Perception of the Dignity of moral Virtue, and good Dispositions of Heart, may

may certainly do many worthy and commendable Actions, even at Times when he has no Thoughts of the Duty which he owes to God, and the Rewards of a future State, in his Mind. But when he falls into a ruffled, or tempestuous State; when he is exposed to sharp Afflictions, either outward or inward; when a Storm of Persecution arises, and he is harrassed, racked, and tormented, for his Adherence to the Cause of Truth and Virtue; he will, in all Probability, stand in need of some other Principle to support him in his Integrity, and to make him bear his Afflictions with Patience and Decency, than a bare Conviction of the Merit of Virtue. And nothing it is certain, will so effectually carry him through the calamitous Scene, in which he is involved, as a firm Belief in God, as the wise and just Governor of the World, who is ever the sure Friend of Goodness; and who, though he may suffer his faithful Servants to fall into diverse severe Distresses, for the Exercise and Improvement of their Virtues, yet will not finally desert them, but will both support them under the Trials which he appoints to them here, and most gloriously reward them for their Fidelity and Perseverance in

SERM. Goodness hereafter. This Faith, firmly set-

II.  tled in the Mind, will, indeed, dispel the blackest Clouds which gather over a good Man in the Times of Distress, and make
 Pf. xcii. *Light to spring up to him in Darkness.* In
 4. virtue of this Persuasion, he will not only cheerfully acquiesce in all the common Evils of Life, but will be able to face the greatest Dangers, and to act an heroic Part under all the Sufferings which the Hatred and Rage of Men can bring upon him for keeping a good Conscience. Of the Truth of this, we have a most eminent Proof in the brave and constant Spirit of *the Apostles and first Christians*, when exposed to the most terrible Persecutions, which was chiefly raised and cherished in them, by a firm Confidence in God, and a lively Hope of a blessed Immortality.

Upon the whole, therefore, it is sufficiently plain, that this Principle of Faith, co-operates with, and greatly assists our natural Sense of moral Good and Evil; and that indeed the Strength and Vigour of the virtuous Affections, the Order and Uniformity of a good Conduct, and the greatest Sublimity and Perfection in Virtue which Men attain to in this World, depend upon, and are owing to the Influence of it.

I shall

I shall now make a few useful Reflexions on what has been discoursed. SERM.
II.

We may see the mischievous Tendency of the Principles of Atheism and Infidelity, and the Necessity of guarding against the Prevalence and Influence of them. The Patrons of the atheistic Scheme have indeed Sometimes alledged in favour of their own Principles, that they contribute to the Benefit and Advantage of Mankind; as they release them from the vain Terrors and Restraints of Superstition, and restore to them the Enjoyment of the original Rights and Liberties of their Nature. But this is the vainest Pretence that can be; depending on the Suppositions, that there is no rational Evidence of the Existence of a Deity, and consequently that all Regard to him is at best but idle and unprofitable; that there is no natural Difference between moral Good and Evil; that Virtue is but an empty Name; that Mankind are not born under the Law of Righteousness, and that the only Rules and Measures of their Conduct are the Informations and Impulses of their inferior Senses, Appetites, and Passions. Allowing these Principles to be just, there might be some Colour for the Conclusion, which the Advocates of the
atheistic

SECT. II. *atheistic Cause have drawn from them;*

III

but as quite the Reverse is true, As the Proofs of the Being of God, and of the Reality and Obligation of moral Virtues are clear and inefragable; as both our Reason and Experience assure us that the true Dignity, Freedom, and Happiness of human Nature result from the Practice of Virtue; and as it is certain that the Belief of a Deity and a just Providence, extending to all the Affairs of Mankind, both in this, and in a future State, is the great Support and Security of Virtue, without which, the very best would arrive at no great Perfection in it, and the greatest Part of Men would fall off from it, and run on in a Course of Vice; it is plain, that the Principles of Atheism which destroy this Belief, must be of the most pernicious and fatal Consequence. And though the Tendency of Principles, however inconvenient or mischievous, is not the most direct Argument of their Falseness, yet the Consideration of the very pernicious Consequences of Atheism, may, at least, put all who are otherwise convinced of its utter Absurdity, upon the most vigorous Opposition to it, and make every one extremely cautious, how he falls in with a Scheme, which

will,

will most probably, subvert his Integrity SERM.
and Happiness, and plunge him in the III.
Depths of Wickedness and Misery. }

2. From what has been said, we may see the Absurdity of the Notions which many have entertained of Faith, as if it was nothing but a confident Reliance upon our Saviour, as having fulfilled the Law of God in our Stead, and as supplying us with an imputed Righteousness, when we have no real Righteousness in Ourselves; or, as if it was only a naked Assent of the Understanding, and the whole Design of it was to fill our Heads with unfruitful Speculations and vain Conceits, or, perhaps, to make us drive on, as hard as we can, in Opposition to all that Common Sense and Reason suggest to the contrary, in believing Contradictions, and receiving the most palpable Absurdities as adorable Mysteries, and incontestable Divine Truths. These are Things quite remote from that Faith which is required from us as Men and Christians, which is always a Principle founded upon rational Evidence, and of a practical Tendency and Influence, which assists and strengthens our good Dispositions, and supports and enlivens us in a steady and uniform Course of Virtue. What the

SERM. Apostle says of Christianity in general, is

II.

true of all the genuine Principles both of natural and revealed Religion, that they

1 Tim. vi. are *Doctrines according to Godliness*; calcu-
3. lated and intended, not for gratifying our

Curiosity or amusing and puzzling our Minds, but for forming and improving a solid Temper of all Piety and Goodness in us; and without this Effect, it is certain, that our Belief of them will not have any Use or Virtue in it: *For as the Body with-*

Jam. ii.
26.

out the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also.

3. We may here observe the perfect Consistency, and close Connexion of Faith and Morality. Attempts have been made to set these at Variance, for different Reasons: Some observing St. Paul in some Passages of his Epistles, to ascribe our *Justification to Faith*, in Opposition to the Works of the Law, have concluded Faith and good Works to have no Affinity or Relation to one another; and that Faith is *all in all* in Religion, while moral Virtue is of no Importance in it. But it is very plain, that by Faith in those Passages, in which St. Paul speaks of it as the Means of our Justification, is meant either the *Christian Religion* in general, in Opposi-
tion

tion to the *Institution of Moses*, which was found weak and ineffectual for the Justification of Men; or bringing them into a State of Righteousness and Acceptance with God; or, more probably in some of the Passages, Men's Acceptance of the Terms of Grace and Salvation which were then offered in the Gospel, upon which they were immediately admitted to the Benefit of Pardon, in Opposition to any antecedent *Works of Righteousness*, upon which they could found a Plea of Justification; though the Practice of all good Works, according to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, as well as the Dictates of Nature and Reason, was absolutely necessary to their final Justification before God. So that the Apostle had not the least Intention in these Places, to set the Belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel, in Opposition to the moral Virtues required by the Laws of it: On the Contrary, it is certain that Faith, in the common Acceptation of the Word, according to St. *Paul*, as well as all the other Sacred Writers, is a practical Principle, which *worketh by Love*, or produceth in us the Sincere Love of God, and of Mankind. Others, in a more refined Way, have endeavoured to make a Separation between

SERM. **II.** between Faith and moral Virtue; alledging that the Influence of Faith derogates from the Excellence and Merit of Virtue, which springs only from noble, generous, and disinterested Principles. Now allowing this to be the Case, as it really is, with respect to Virtue, there is yet no Reason to imagine, that the Influence of Faith will ever hurt its Interests; or, that this Influence is not necessary to make Virtue shine out in its full Lustre and Perfection. For in the Scene which Faith discovers, such Objects are exhibited and presented, as must effectually draw forth every noble Power, and every generous Affection of the Soul, and make them unfold and exert themselves with much greater Force and Vigour, than by any other Means they could possibly be brought to do. Besides that the Fear of Misery, and desire of private Good, which the Consideration of the Objects of our Faith naturally excites, are plainly necessary to keep the Generality of Men in good Order; and though the Acting solely from these Principles, would deserve but little Approbation, yet the Persons who are at first restrained from Vice only by means of them, will certainly in Time be struck with the Beauty of Virtue itself,

itself, and afterwards proceed freely in a **SERMO**
Course of Righteousness, and offer to God **II**
a liberal and manly Service of Love and
Affection.

4. As the Belief of a Deity, and a future
State, is of so great Consequence to the
Support and Establishment of Virtue, and
as Christianity has laid down the most ra-
tional and consistent Scheme with respect
to the Deity, concerning whom the greatest
Part of Men have usually fallen into *vain*
Imaginations; and as it has confirmed all Rom. i.
21.
the natural Proofs of a future Life, and gi-
ven such a strong additional Assurance of it,
as must take away from the Mind all
Doubts and Suspensions of its Reality, we
may from hence see the great Use and Im-
portance of this Religion. This, indeed,
is by no means, the only Advantage which
the Cause of Virtue receives from the Re-
velation of the Gospel; but this alone is
of so great Moment, as must make all who
wish well to the Interests of Virtue and of
Mankind, greatly to value the Religion of
our Saviour, and determine them, upon ob-
taining a rational Conviction of its Truth,
heartily to embrace it, and to *hold fast the* Heb. x.
23.
Profession of it, without wavering.

5. Lastly,

SERM. 5. Lastly, we may observe the Necessity
II. of confirming and enlivening our Faith in
God, and raising and animating our Expectations of a future State. As the Strength of our Virtue, and our Perseverance in Integrity, depend exceedingly upon our doing this, we should apply Ourselves to it with great Zeal and Care. And to this Purpose, we should always have a clear View of the solid Proofs or Arguments which convince us of the Being of God, and his wise and just Providence over the World, and of the Certainty of another Life. The implicit and lazy Assent which we usually give to these great Principles of Religion, has but little Force for operating on our Affections, and governing our Conduct, and is easily borne down by Temptations: Whereas, if we acquired a strong and habitual Conviction of the Truth of Them, by a Serious Examination of the Evidences which support Them, and by reviving and revolving these frequently in our Minds; and, if withal, we raised our Apprehensions of the Deity, by representing him often to Ourselves in the most lively Characters of Beauty and Majesty, and dwelt on the delightful Contemplation of the sublime Glories and Felicities of
Futurity,

Futurity, we should certainly find our Per-
suasion of the Existence of God, and of **SERM. II.**
the Truth of a future State, a most fruit-
ful Principle of all Virtue in us; which
would raise us above the Power of Temp-
tations, and give us a *Victory over the* John v.
World, and make us to continue *stedfast* 4. Cor. xv.
and unmovable in the Work of the Lord, 58.
and always to abound in it.

F SER-

66
SERMON III.

The true Happiness of Mankind.

ISAIAH III. x.

*Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be
well with him.*

SERM.
III.

OF all our Perceptions Those of Vir-
tue and Happiness, are the most
important and interesting, and ex-
cite Desires and Affections in us, which are
plainly the strongest and most active Prin-
ciples in our Nature. Nothing, therefore,
can be of greater Consequence to the good
Order, and true Enjoyment of Life, than
the Harmony of these Perceptions and Af-
fections, and their co-operating to the same
End and Purpose. It has been always the
Business of the Adversaries of the Cause of
Virtue, to set them at Variance, and to
make a Separation between them, alledging
that our natural Appetite and Desire of
Happiness,

Happiness, leads us into a Course quite SERM.
contrary to that, to which the Law of Vir- III.
tue, or of our Duty, directs us. If this
was really the Case, the Condition of Man-
kind would indeed be very miserable; as
they would find themselves to be perpetu-
ally in a State of violent Struggle and Con-
flict, the Consequences of which would ne-
cessarily be great Inconsistency and Confu-
sion in their Conduct, together with the
most grievous Distraction, Uneasiness, and
Remorse of Mind. But this Pretence is
without all Foundation; for however the
private Affections of the Men who mistake
their true Interest, and have corrupted their
Hearts, may prompt them to Actions,
which can never be reconciled with their
natural Sense of their Duty, yet in those
who judge truly of their Happiness, and
pursue it according to the Intention of Na-
ture, there are no Desires of private Good,
which interfere in the least with their Ap-
probation and Love of Virtue: On the con-
trary, such Persons pursue Virtue, not only
as an Object of their highest Esteem, but
as the Source of all Good to them, as yield-
ing them Pleasures the most satisfying and
felicitating that can be.

SERM.

III. *the Text, to say to the Righteous, that it shall be well with them, to pronounce the Men of Piety and Virtue truly happy; and in the following Part of the Verse, a very substantial Reason is assigned for our saying so; for they shall eat of the Fruit of their Doings, in the very Works in which they chiefly employ themselves, they shall meet with the highest Enjoyment, and find their Desires of Pleasure, and several Powers of perceiving Good, most nobly and fully gratified.*

For explaining and illustrating this Subject of the Blessedness of the Righteous, it may be of Use to premise a few Observations in general, concerning the proper Happiness, or chief Good of Mankind.

As the Happiness of any Beings must arise from the Gratification of their natural Powers of Perception, and especially Those of Them which yield the most intense and durable Pleasures; for understanding wherein the true Happiness of Men consists, we must reflect a little on our several Senses, or Faculties of receiving Pleasure, and which of them are the Inlets of the most pure and solid Joys and Delights to us. Now it must be evident to every One who is at all

acquainted with his own Constitution, that SERM.
besides his external Senses, whereby he ap- III.
prehends, and receives agreeable Sensations
from outward Objects, he has several in-
ward Powers or Faculties, which being
gratified with their proper Objects, afford
him a great Variety of Entertainment and
Pleasure. Such, in the first place, is his
Taste of Truth and Knowledge, and his
Sense of Beauty, Harmony, Order, Pro-
portion, and the like, which, when duly
cultivated, are Sources of many exquisite
and elegant Amusements and Delights.
Such likewise is his publick and social
Sense, which makes him often zealously to
interest himself in the Concerns of Others,
and gives him a generous Pleasure in pro-
moting their Happiness, and a Share in all
the innocent Joys which he knows them
to partake of. And such, above all others,
is the Faculty of discerning and approving
the pious, honest, and kind Affections of
his own Heart; which makes him con-
scious, in the Exercise of these Affections,
of an intrinsic Dignity and Worth, which
gives him a Character with himself, and
other intelligent and moral Beings; and as
the Consequence of this, the joyful Hope
of the Esteem and Love of the wiser and

SERM. better part of Mankind, and, which is of
 III. infinitely greater Moment, of the Protec-
 tion of the Governor of the World in this
 Life, and his Approbation and Favour for
 ever in the next.

* These are the principal Capacities or
 Powers of Enjoyment, which belong to
 our Nature. Some of them we have in
 common with some of the inferior Kinds
 of Animals, I mean the outward Organs of
 Sensation; and if there was nothing higher
 or more excellent in our Constitution, our
 great Felicity would consist in providing
 for our animal Life, and in enjoying all
 sensual Gratifications, as long, and with as
 high a Relish, as could be. But as our
 Creator has been much more liberal to us,
 as he has endowed us with noble Faculties,
 which raise us far above the brutal Natures,
 which ally us to the superior Orders of
 Beings, and make us in some Degree ca-
 pable

* It may, perhaps, be thought, that in giving an Account
 of the Happiness of Men, some Notice should be taken of
 That which spontaneously arises merely upon our being in
 a perfectly sound and calm State of Body and Mind, free
 from all Pain and Perturbation. It is certain that there is
 an Ease flowing from hence, which agreeably fills up several
 long Intervals in the Lives of many Persons; yet no
 great Account can be made of it, in calculating the Happi-
 ness of Mankind, who being endowed with a great Variety
 of perceptive and active Powers, attain to their Perfection
 and Felicity, not by Indolence and Inactivity, but by ex-
 erting their Powers effectually about the Objects which are
 naturally suited and adapted to Them.

pable of their high and beatific Exercises, the Operations and Perceptions of these sublimer Powers in our Constitution, must be chiefly considered in making an Estimate of our true Perfection and Happiness. Indeed none of the Pleasures and Satisfaction which are here provided for us, none of our lowest sensitive Gratifications, are to be despised or rejected: They are all to be thankfully received, as Instances, or Effects of the Divine Bounty, for rendering our present State more supportable and comfortable to us. But if we had no other Pleasures than those which flowed in upon us by our external Senses, tho' we had them in the greatest Affluence, and enjoyed them with the most exquisite Taste, we should not at all be happy: nay, it is certain, that we should find ourselves very wretched in the Want of those Gratifications, of which, our intellectual, social, and moral Powers are capable. Indeed the chief Good of an Affluence of the Means of sensitive Pleasure, is derived, not from the private Gratifications which it affords to the Possessor, but from some Reference, which It is always supposed to have to Society, and the carrying on a decent and generous, a kind and friendly Commerce in Life. Without

SERM. some Imagination of this sort, the Pomp
 III. and Luxury of what is called High-living,
 would soon fall into Disesteem even with
 Those who, perhaps, have no fixed No-
 tion of any higher Enjoyments. And with
 Men of Reflection, it is certain, that sensi-
 ble Pleasures will be always thought the
 smallest Part of our Happiness; as they are
 only the Satisfaction of our lowest Powers
 of Perception, and are so very short and
 transient, perishing with the Moment of
 Enjoyment, leaving no agreeable Relish be-
 hind them, but often Satiety and Disgust;
 and as they are of no Use to support or re-
 lieve us under the Calamities of Life, and
 sometimes hardly yield a sufficient Recom-
 pence for the Pains and Trouble which we
 take in procuring them.

If to the Gratifications of the external
 Senses, we should add those which arise
 from the Pursuit of speculative Truth, the
 Acquisition of Knowledge, the Contem-
 plation of Beauty, Harmony, Symmetry,
 Art, Genius, and the like; tho' these ap-
 pear to our superior Powers, much more
 worthy of our Pursuit, than any merely
 sensual Indulgences; as they are all more
 refined and durable; as some of them open
 and enlarge our Faculties, and others of
 them

them polish and adorn our Manners, and SERM.
wonderfully sooth and solace us under some III.

smaller Uneasinesses and Perturbations; yet as the Value of these Enjoyments, as well as our sensitive Pleasures, depends in a great Measure on the Connexion which they have with some social and moral Delights; as they are always found in Experience to diminish and flatten by Familiarity and Use, and are totally insufficient to support us under the severer Distresses, to which we are often exposed; it is very plain, that as the true Happiness of Men consists not in sensitive Enjoyments, so neither in the Pleasures of Knowledge, and the Gratifications of their imaginative Powers.

We must proceed, therefore, to the Consideration of the Pleasures received by our other Senses and Faculties, our publick and social Sense, and Faculty of moral Discernment. And whoever reflects upon himself while he gratifies his publick Taste, and exercises his social Affections; while he contributes sincerely and effectually to the Good of his fellow Creatures; or, even while he contemplates the Happiness which they are by any means possessed of, and entertains himself with the Thought, that the universal Welfare of the Creation, notwithstanding

SERM. withstanding the Confusions and Distrac-
III tions of this World, is secured by the Care
 of a perfectly wise, powerful, just, and good
 Providence: whoever, I say, reflects upon
 his own Perceptions and Feelings, while
 he is under the lively Influence of this
 Temper, will certainly own them to be
 extremely joyous and delightful: The Plea-
 sures which spring from hence are pure and
 clear, very stable and durable, and of great
 Use to relieve and exhilarate a benevolent
 Heart, under any Pains or Losses that are
 at all tolerable. Again, when a Man re-
 flects upon the Joy which he receives from
 a self-approving Mind, from the Consci-
 oufness of an inherent Excellence and Worth,
 and a Sense of Merit with God and good
 Men, he must undoubtedly be convinced
 that of all the Pleasures which he has ever
 experienced, this is of the greatest Moment
 and Importance to him. This is a Joy
 which so nearly and intimately affects us,
 which so thoroughly penetrates our whole
 Frame, and is so constant and permanent,
 springing up fresh and lively upon every
 Review of our Conduct, and so much aug-
 mented by those most pleasing Expecta-
 tions which naturally accompany it, that it
 plainly constitutes the principal Part of our
 Happiness:

Happiness: It is indeed equivalent to all SERM.
our other Joys, and superior to them, as III.
it alone has Strength enough to make us
relish our Existence in all Events, to sup-
port us under the greatest natural Evils,
and render us contented in the Absence of
all other Satisfactions; and as it puts Life
into all our other Pleasures, which if they
were quite separated from it, would soon
grow nauseous, or insipid.

Having premised thus much in General,
concerning the proper Happiness of Men,
it will be easy now to see that the Righte-
ous are truly blessed, and that they of all
Men enjoy the most compleat and perfect
Felicity. By the *Righteous* we are to un-
derstand the Men of sincere Piety and Vir-
tue, or the Persons possessed of the Affec-
tions of Reverence, Love, Gratitude, and
Submission to God, and of Justice, Up-
rightness, Humanity, and Benevolence to-
wards Men, and who uniformly exert these
Affections in a Course of all good Actions.
Now it is very plain, that there are no Plea-
sures of which Mankind are capable, which
are not, or at least, may not, in the ordinary
Course of Things, be enjoyed, and almost
all of them in the highest Perfection, by the
Men of this Character. For

SECT. II

III

As to the Pleasures of the external
 Senses: As these lie open to Persons of all
 Characters, the Pious and Virtuous must
 have their Share of Them as well as any
 Others; there being nothing in their Tem-
 per to restrain them from any Enjoyments
 that are innocent: And such our sensitive
 Gratifications, within certain Degrees and
 Measures, undoubtedly are. It would be
 doing great Injustice to the Principles of
 Religion and Virtue, to represent them as
 destructive of any part of the Happiness of
 human Life; for even when these Princi-
 ples restrain the Men in whom they pre-
 vail, from all Excesses both in the Acqui-
 sition and Use of sensitive good Things;
 when They make them greatly to under-
 value all Pleasures of this Kind, in Compa-
 rison of more excellent and permanent Pos-
 sessions and Enjoyments; they still leave
 them at Liberty to indulge their Appetites
 and Desires of them, as they easily may,
 within the Bounds of Nature, and indeed
 enable them to do it to great Advantage;
 by obliging them to such Diligence and
 good Oeconomy in the Conduct of their
 Affairs, as will be the best Security for hav-
 ing always the Means of any sensual Grati-
 fications, which they can desire, in their
 Power;

Power; and by inuring them to such a Strict Temperance and Moderation in the Use of Them, as must quicken their Taste of Them, and render Them more capable of enjoying the Good of Them, than the Persons, who by an extravagant Course of Voluptuousness, or Debauchery, stupify their Senses, and pall their Appetites, can usually be thought to be. III

2. The same Thing may be said as to the Pleasures resulting from the Acquisition of Knowledge, the Exercise of ingenious Arts, or the Contemplation of ingenious Works, and of beautiful, regular, and harmonious Objects. These being common to all Sorts of Men, they must be in the Power of the Righteous, as well as of any Others; And supposing the Abilities of the Virtuous for the Pursuit and Acquisition of Knowledge, and their Capacity for Works of Art and Genius, or their Taste for the Contemplation of Them, and of the Objects of natural Beauty, Order, and the like, to be naturally equal, it may be presumed that the Pleasures arising from these Sources, will be rather more in their Power, than they are in the Power of Others; as the Principles which prevail in them must make them more especially diligent in treasuring

SER. M. furing up in their Minds the most useful
 III. and entertaining Knowledge, and free them
 from all violent Passions which would ruffle
 and discompose them, and settle them in
 an habitual Calmness and Serenity, which
 is the only Temper, in which we can at-
 tend to the Objects which entertain and
 please the Imagination, so as to be deeply
 struck, and agreeably affected and moved
 by them.

3. As to the most important and princi-
 pal Pleasures of Men, which are derived
 from the Exercise of our social and bene-
 volent Affections, from the Consciousness
 of an internal Dignity and Excellence, from
 the Reflections of a self-applauding Mind,
 with their natural and joyful Attendants ;
 it is apparent, not only that the Righteous
 enjoy these, but that They alone enjoy
 them in any Perfection. In the Character
 of the Righteous, the vigorous, steady, and
 uniform Exercise of all the social, kind,
 generous, and grateful Affections is inclu-
 ded : They must, therefore, of course, feel
 all those most soft and exquisite Touches
 of Joy, which accompany the very Mo-
 tions and Operations of these Affections ;
 by these Channels, they not only commu-
 nicate Good to their Fellows, in doing
 which

which they find a most Divine Pleasure, 8 E. R. M.
but participate of all their Satisfaction, and III.
receive that noble and permanent Delight
which proceeds from reflecting on the Pro-
vision which is made for the absolute and
general Happiness of Mankind, by the uni-
versal Father and Governor of All. And
as the Righteous must be sensible of their
having and exerting these, and all other
virtuous Affections, they must likewise ne-
cessarily have that most pure and solid Plea-
sure which flows from a Perception of their
own Merit, and the Reflections of a Mind
always easy and satisfied with itself; which
must be greatly heightened by a Sense of
that Honour and Esteem which they are
entitled to from others, and that generous
Applause and Congratulation which they
actually receive from the Wise and Virtu-
ous; and must grow up into the most per-
fect Joy, from the Hopes which naturally
spring up in them, of obtaining the Ap-
probation and Friendship of that great Be-
ing, who is the unerring Judge of Worth
and Excellence, and from whose Favour
they may promise themselves, not only
Protection and Support in this World, but
the Continuance of their Existence, and an
Advancement to a State in which they will
be

SERM. be encreasing in Knowledge and Virtue,
III. and enjoy all the most manly and refined Gratifications for evermore. That this great Happiness is the sure Portion of the Righteous, is always plain to themselves from Experience; and may be sufficiently evident to all who are acquainted with the Constitution of Nature, and the established Order, Connexions, and Tendencies of Things. And what distinguishes this Happiness of good Men, is, that as it is the greatest which can be enjoyed, so it is peculiar to Them: In the Joys or Pleasures issuing from other Sources, the Virtuous have a Share only in common with others, and sometimes in a lower Degree than many of a different Character; but of those which flow from the Exercise of Virtue, and Consciousness of Merit, they are the sole Possessors and Proprietors. For however the most Vicious may sometimes do a good Action, and in Consequence of that, taste so much of the Pleasure of Virtue, as may be enough to convince them, if they would but seriously reflect, of their extreme Folly and Misery in parting with such a noble Happiness, for something which, in Comparison, is very mean and unsatisfying; yet all bad Men are, and must necessarily be
Strangers

Strangers to that steady, uniform, and ever-
flowing Delight, which proceeds from a

SERM.
III.

settled Course of Humanity, Righteousness,
and Piety; to that inward Serenity and
Tranquillity which good Men constantly
enjoy, to the Honour and fair Reputation
which attend such in the World, and to
those blessed Hopes which support them
under all the Distresses of Life, which make
their Deaths calm and peaceful, and their
Prospect of Futurity ravishing and trans-
porting. Instead of partaking of this in-
estimable Happiness, the Wicked, by the
very Order of Nature, are exposed to the
Racks and Tortures of bitter and enraged
Passions, to the Stings of Guilt, and the
Remorse and Anguish of a self-accusing
Mind; to Infamy and Contempt from the
wiser and better Part of their Fellows; to
Gloominess and Dejection in Adversity, to
dismal Presages, and alarming Fears of that
Being, who is the just Avenger of Unright-
eousness, and the supreme Disposer of the
Fate of Mankind. *This is the Portion of a* Job xxx.
wicked Man, and the Heritage appointed^{29.}
unto him by God.

From all these Considerations, it is abun-
dantly evident, that the Prophet has with
great Reason assured *the Righteous, that it*

G

shall

SERM. *shall be well with Them*, that their Title to

III. Happiness is the most firm and secure that can be; there being no Part of it which they do not stand upon, as a fair Foundation for obtaining a Share of, as any others; and the principal Articles of it, which vastly exceed every thing besides that can be called pleasant or good, and without which all other Pleasures, upon cool Reflection seem to be nothing, being appropriated to Them, which from the very Nature of Things They must partake of, and which no other Persons can possibly enjoy.

I shall now conclude with a few Reflections upon this Subject.

I. We may see the utter Absurdity of all those Superstitious Inventions, whereby Men propose to attain to a State of Happiness, and the Favour of God, without the Practice of moral Piety and Virtue. The Desire of Happiness, and especially that Part of it, which is of the highest Consequence, the Peace and Tranquillity of our Minds, and Hope of the Approbation and Acceptance of our Creator, is so strong and efficacious a Principle in our Nature, that all Men are endeavouring in some Way or other to gratify it: And the
only

only proper Means of gratifying it, must SERM.
be very obvious to every Man of Confi- III.
deration, by the Exercise and Improve-
ment of all pious and good Affections,
which will be naturally accompanied with
the highest Joy; by such a sincere, steady,
and uniform Course of Righteousness, as
will always bear a Review, and yield the
most delightful Relish, and comfortable
Hope, upon Reflection. But such is
the Blindness and Folly of a great Part of
Mankind, that they imagine they may ob-
tain Peace of Mind, and Confidence to-
wards God in quite different Methods.
Many of them, may, perhaps, be convinced
that the Practice of Virtue is indeed their
Duty, and the best Foundation on which
they can procure the Quiet of their Minds,
and entitle themselves to the Favour of
their Creator. But this being a Matter
which they are not at all inclined to, they
are willing to think they may accomplish
the same Ends by other Expedients, such
as Penances and Austerities, great Zeal in
Points of Belief, high Pretences to Devo-
tion, and the like, which are used in great
Variety by them, according to the different
Notions and Tempers which prevail in
Them. But now all Attempts of this
kind,

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Variety by them, according to the different
Notions and Tempers which prevail in
Them. But now all Attempts of this
kind,

SERM. kind, are plainly so many Struggles against
 III. Nature, and must therefore certainly fail
 of Success. It is indeed altogether as impossible to make Vice and Happiness by any means consistent, as it is to reconcile Light and Darkness, or to raise a great Building out of the most disagreeing and jarring Materials. And nothing, one would think, but a Total Want of Reflection, or the most wretched Prejudices, arising from a deep Corruption of Heart, can hinder any from discerning this Impossibility.

2. We may here see the Weakness of the Objection which has been often made, to the Conduct of Providence, from the scanty Portion of Happiness assigned to good Men, compared with that enjoyed by the Wicked, in this World. This is an Objection which not only the Adversaries of all Religion have triumphed in, thinking it sufficient to overthrow the Belief of a wise and just Administration in the Universe; but which some pious Persons, in some gloomy Tempers, have thought very formidable, and to be solved only by the Prospect of a future State, in which the Measure of good Men's Happiness shall be completed, and the Losses and Calamities which They have here endured, greater than what befall the Bad,

Bad, shall be abundantly compensated and made up to Them. Now allowing the Fact to be, as the Objection represents it, the Difficulty could not indeed be removed, without supposing the Certainty of an equitable Distribution to be made to Mankind in a future State: But as in this Case, it would, perhaps, be somewhat hard to prove the Truth of a future Life, this is not the proper Answer to the Objection, which will easily admit of another Solution, which is, that it is founded on a Misrepresentation of Fact. For what can induce any to think the present Enjoyments of the Righteous to be inferior to those of the Wicked? The Persons who judge thus, must make a very false Calculation of the Happiness of human Life, computing it, probably, in Proportion to the Largeness of a Man's Fortune, the Height of his Power, Station, and the like. Now even as to these external Advantages, it is plain, that Providence does not confine them to the Vicious, more than to the Virtuous; they are Things generally to be purchased by the Skill and Industry of every one, and, in the ordinary State of the World, fall always in a competent Degree to the Share of any good Men, who with tolerable Prudence and Diligence apply themselves to

SERM. the Acquisition of Them; and would fall

III. still more remarkably to their Share, under
 such a good Constitution of Society, as human Wisdom might easily effect: So that with respect to any Good which may be in these Things, when all Particulars are justly stated, Providence may, perhaps, be said to have favoured the Men of Piety and Goodness, rather than Those of a contrary Character. But allowing that the Design of Providence, or the original Tendency of Things does not always take Effect in this Case; but that the Wicked are often possessed of much higher Degrees of Riches, Rank, and Power in the World, than their more deserving Neighbours, which is indeed Fact, yet still *a Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth*; so far from it, that Life is usually enjoyed to the greatest Advantage by Those of a moderate Fortune and Condition; and large Possessions, without a Disposition to improve them well, are only great Snares and Curses to a Man, which draw him into a deeper Guilt, and plunge him more irretrievably in Misery. And if a vicious Man cannot derive Happiness from his outward Possessions; it is certain that all the inward Sources of it are quite cut off from him,

Luke xii.
15.

him, and a Fountain of the blackest Woe to S E R M.
him is opened in his own Breast: Instead III.
of that perpetual Spring of the most pure
Joy and Peace which every good Man finds
in himself, the Wicked has within him,
what the *Prophet* compares to the *troubled*
Sea, casting up Mire and Dirt; a Tumult Iſa. lvii.
20.
of disorderly Passions, distracting and tor-
menting him; and in any Moments of Re-
flection, self-condemning Thoughts, Con-
sciousness of Ill-desert, dark Suspicions, and
dreadful Apprehensions of the impending
Vengeance of a superior Power; which
must necessarily throw him into as great
Misery, as it is possible to conceive any to
endure upon Earth. It is, therefore, a
most false and unjust Impeachment of Pro-
vidence, to say, that the Happiness of bad
Men, is greater than that of the Good, in
this World: On the Contrary, it is ap-
parent, that when the respective Enjoy-
ments of the Persons of these opposite Cha-
racters are fairly computed, the Ballance
must be almost always vastly on the Side
of the Righteous, and that the Governor
of the World has provided a noble Re-
compence for Virtue here, as well as a
most glorious and eternal Reward for it
hereafter.

SERM. 3. We may here clearly see how vain
 III. and groundless all those Prejudices are,
 which either the Adversaries of Religion in
 general, or any Others conceive against the
 Practice of Piety and Virtue, as being a
 Thing burthensome to human Nature, and
 inconsistent with the true Pleasure and En-
 joyment of Life. This is a Notion which
 many entertain of a strictly religious and
 virtuous Life, and which never fails to give
 them a great Distaste to That, which ap-
 pears so frightful and disagreeable. Se-
 veral, it is to be feared, gladly take up,
 and cherish this Apprehension, only that
 They may render Themselves more Easy
 in their Wickedness, and have Something
 to say in Excuse of it. And Others, may,
 possibly, be deceived into it, from a mis-
 taken Interpretation of some Passages of
 Scripture, and the injudicious Representa-
 tions which have too often been made of
 Religion, as if it was a perpetual Conflict
 with Nature, and a Constraint on our most
 prevailing Desires and Affections; or, per-
 haps, from the indiscreet Zeal and affected
 Austerities of some Professors of Religion,
 from whose Conduct and Management of
 Themselves, under a Pretence of Piety, if
 one were to judge of the true Genius of
 Religion,

Religion, he must indeed conclude it to be **SERMON III.**
destructive of many of our most innocent

Enjoyments, and intended for a Punishment to Mankind. But whencesoever this disadvantageous Opinion of a pious and virtuous Course may take its Rise, it is certainly false, and very injurious to God, who has been so far from putting a Force upon our Nature, and restraining us from any thing that really tends to our Good, by the Laws which he has given us, that, on the Contrary, the Observation of these Laws is the noblest Improvement, and most delightful Exercise of our natural Powers and Affections, and the only sure and effectual Means of promoting our highest Happiness. The Truth is, it is Vice which is altogether unnatural, and ruinous to all our most valuable Interests; which spoils the native Beauty and subverts the Order of the Soul, which forces us upon the vilest Drudgeries, and involves us in the most deplorable Misery. And it is the Practice of Religion and Virtue alone, which can restore us to our original Dignity and Freedom, and lay the Foundation of our perfect Happiness. And before this can be found fault with, as lying heavy upon human Nature, and abridging our Pleasures, it

SERM. must always be misrepresented, or viewed
 III. in a wrong Light: To all, who apprehend
 it rightly, it must appear the most natural
 and agreeable Thing in the World.

4. From what has been discoursed, we may see the strong Foundation which is laid for our practising all Virtue. To engage us to This, both Conscience, and Interest; our natural Sense of Duty, and our Desire of Happiness, conspire. The Dictates of our Consciences concerning the moral Good or Evil of our Conduct, lay the firmest Obligation upon us to abstain from Vice, and to abound in all Goodness: But supposing the Principle of Conscience to have lost its Authority and Power over us, and that we are so far degenerated, as not to be capable of discerning, in any lively Manner, the Beauties of Holiness, and of being warmed with the Love of Virtue; yet, so long as we love Ourselves, and feel a Concern for our own Welfare, which all will acknowledge they do, it may be expected, that we will have the utmost Dread of Vice, the certain Source of Ruin and Misery, and fly from it, as we would from a deadly Plague, or an enraged Monster ready to devour us; and that we will use all Methods in our Power, for recovering
 Ourselves

Ourselfs from our Corruptions, and at-
taining to a State of Piety and Righteous-
ness, which is the only possible Means of
Happiness. If, notwithstanding the neces-
sary Dependance which our Happiness has
upon the Practice of Virtue, we still neglect
this, and indulge Ourselfs in Habits of
Wickedness, we shall discover a most
thoroughly depraved and infatuated Tem-
per, which is lost, both to all Sense of In-
genuity, and all rational Regard for our
most obvious Interest. If we act even with
any Degree of Prudence, we shall keep far
away from the destructive Paths of Vice,
and enter upon the Ways of Righteousness,
in which Freedom, and Safety, and Satis-
faction of all Sorts, are to be found. And
to This, certainly, all of us will be easily
induced, who have any Generosity and
Nobleness of Soul, or any Gratitude to-
wards God, for connecting our Duty and
Interest; or contriving Things so, as that
in performing the Service which he requires
from us, we should find our true Good and
Happiness.

S E R M O N

SERMON IV.

The Folly of Denying, or of Wishing against, the Existence of the Deity.

PSALM XIV. I.

The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no God.

SERM.
IV.

THE Thing which the Psalmist here brands with the Name of Folly, may be either the Judgment of a Man's Mind, or the Wish of his Heart, against the Existence of a Deity: He seems, indeed, to have the Latter more particularly in his View, as it is the Sentence of the Heart which he speaks of, rather than of the Understanding. It is certain, that Both may be most justly termed Folly or Madness, though of the Two, the Latter is the more gross and unnatural Infatuation. In treating of this Subject, I shall consider the monstrous Folly, I. Of denying the Existence

Existence of God. II. Of wishing that there were no God: And afterwards make some Use and Application of what is discourfled. SERM. IV.

I. As to the Folly of denying the Existence of God: The Evidences of the Existence of a Deity, or of a Being infinitely wise, powerful, good, and holy, the Maker, Preserver, and Governor of all Things; the Evidences, I say, of the Existence of such a Being, are so various and numerous, that they must necessarily strike and satisfy the Minds of all, who make any proper Use of their rational Faculties. Wherever we fix our Attention, we meet with the clearest Characters and Impressions of the Divinity: Every Thing in the Universe, without us, and within us, attests and proves *his eternal Power, and Godhead*. It Rom. i. is plain that all the Beings that we are acquainted with in this World, are so imperfect and dependent, that they are utterly insufficient for their own Production and Sustainance; they must, therefore, owe their Existence, and Preservation, to some superior Efficient; who is himself unoriginated and independent, who has formed, disposed, and ordered them in such a Manner, that they loudly proclaim the Perfections of

Existence

SERM. of their great Author. It would be endless
 IV. to instance in all Particulars within our
 Observation, which evince the amazing
 Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and other Excellencies of him, who made, upholds, and governs all Things. In general, the vast Extent of the Universe, the Magnitude, Variety, and Stability of the heavenly Bodies, the Swiftness and Constancy of their Motions, their Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Relation to one another; the Composition of this Earth, every Way furnished and accommodated to be the Habitation of innumerable Systems of sensitive Natures, and of Man, its principal and most noble Inhabitant; the Vegetation and Growth of Plants; the Generation, Nutrition, and various Instincts of Animals; the Structure of their Bodies, so diversified, and yet so admirably contrived for the greatest Use of the several Tribes, or Species of them; the Formation of the human Body, with the most surprizing Apparatus in it for serving the Ends of Life; and above all, the Fabrick of our Minds, our Powers of Perception, Judgment, Reason, Reflection, and Liberty; our Sense of Beauty, Order, Harmony, Proportion; our Conscience of moral Good and Evil, our Approbation and
 Love

Love of the One, and our Dislike and Hatred of the Other: These Things are such clear and incontestable Proofs of the infinite Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, Righteousness, and Sanctity, of the Original, Creating, Governing Mind, that the Man must be stupidly inadvertent, or obstinately prejudiced, on whom they do not make a deep Impression. Accordingly, it appears in fact, that the Generality of Mankind, have been ever ready to infer the Existence and Perfections of the Deity, from the most common and obvious Appearances in the Universe, and that the Few who have seemed either incredulous, or sceptical, as to these Points, have been such, who made but little or no Use of their reasonable Powers, or perverted and abused them, to cast a Mist over the most evident Truths, by Subtilties, and strained Suppositions, which could never enter into any plain honest Understanding, and upon which, none of a sound Judgment will ever lay any Weight. How, in Truth, can any who reason upon the Being of a God, in the Manner in which they reason in other analogous Cases, ever fail to submit to the Evidences of his Existence? Who that upon seeing some grand Building, and
the

SERM.
IV.

SERM. the Elegance, Proportion, and Convenience

IV. of all its Parts, immediately infers a Builder, and his great Ability and Skill as an Architect; will not, upon the Contemplation of the Universe, and the wondrous Beauty, Order, and Contrivance of it, discern an omnipotent Intelligence, who planned and reared the mighty Fabrick? Who that from a prudent and just Oeconomy in a Family, from a constant Care to provide for its Necessities, and proper Rules laid down for the orderly Behaviour of its several Members, concludes that there must be some wise and good Father, or Head of it; or, that from the good Constitution of a Society, from excellent Laws taking place in it, for the Protection and Encouragement of Honesty and Virtue, and the Restraint and Discouragement of Iniquity and Vice, and an equitable and impartial Administration of all publick Affairs, assures himself of a righteous Magistracy, presiding and governing in it; who, I say, that draws these Inferences, which are very just, can help concluding, from the Provision which is made for the Happiness of all sensitive Creatures, from the Abilities with which Men are furnished, for rendering themselves, and one another, happy; from their
social

social Connexions, from the Power of Con-
science, and the Law of Virtue which we
are naturally under, that there is a universal
Patent of Nature, a most indulgent and
gracious Father of the human Kind, a
righteous and holy Governor of moral
Agents ! He who can easily account for the
ordinary Effects of human Power and Art,
by resolving them into their proper Causes,
and yet refuses to ascribe the most surprizing
Appearances of Nature to the Agency of a
Divine Mind, the only adequate Cause of
them, either falls far short of his usual Ca-
pacity and Penetration in judging of this
most important Article, or rather is defec-
tive in that Honesty and Impartiality of
Temper, which it highly becomes us to
carry along with us in all our Researches
and Inquiries, and is, in every Case, a ne-
cessary Qualification for our attaining to the
Knowledge of the Truth. If indeed the
Notions which are so apt to arise in us, of
Power, Design, Wisdom, Goodness, and
the like, in the Constitution, and Govern-
ment of the Universe, were only the rash
Imaginations of our Childhood, and un-
thinking Age ; if, upon a better Acquain-
tance with Nature, we saw but little Rea-
son for admiring its Contrivance and Order,

SERM. we might then justly make but little account of the Argument arising from thence
 IV.  for the Divine Existence. But as the Contrary is well known to be the Case, as the farther we go in our Inquiries into the Constitution of Nature, particularly of the animal and rational Parts of it, we meet with still clearer and stronger Convictions of a perfectly wise, powerful, good, and righteous Author and Governor of it, and have indeed Ground to think that the Proofs of his Existence, are endless and inexhaustible, that any pretending to Understanding and Knowledge, after all this, should seem to be either altogether sceptical, or undetermined in their Opinion, as to the Cause and Origin of Things; or persuaded that the Universe has existed from all Eternity, and that the Changes which happen in it, are produced only by a brutal Force, or Necessity of Nature, void of all Counsel, Design, and Goodness; or that all Things came into the State in which they are, and still subsist by mere Chance, or Accident, is the absurdest and most unreasonable Thing that can be. Such Persons, *professing themselves to be wise, become eminently Fools.* For, *surely, vain are all Men by Nature, according to the Reasoning of the Author of the*

Rom. i.
22.

Book of Wisdom, who are ignorant of God, SERMON
and cannot out of the good Things that are IV.
seen, know him that is; neither by consider- Wisdom
ing the Works, acknowledge the Workmaster; xiii. 1-5.
who being delighted with the Beauty of the
Fire, or Wind, or Air, or Water, nor the
Circle of the Stars, and the Lights of Hea-
ven, yet know not how much better the Lord
of them is, and that the first Author of
Beauty hath created them; and who being
astonished at their Power and Virtue, yet
understand not how much mightier is he that
made them. For by the Greatness and Beau-
ty of the Creatures, proportionably the Ma-
ker of them is seen.

II. As to the Folly of Wishing that there
were no God. The denying the Existence
of God, is, certainly, the Height of Absur-
dity and Madness, as it is a plain Contra-
diction to all the Sense and Reason of Man-
kind; but after all, if it could be supposed
to proceed only from a Defect of a Man's
Understanding, which however can hardly
at any time be the Case, it would be a com-
passionable and pardonable Folly: But to
wish that there were no God, if a Man has
any true Notion of his Nature, is the most
unnatural and monstrous Infatuation, and

SER M. discovers the most perverse and inexten-

IV. ble Turn of Mind that can be.

It is but a small Part of the Evil of this Temper, that it implies strong Prejudice, and a want of that Candour and Ingenuity, which is so highly becoming reasonable Beings in the Exercise of their intelligent Powers. The Wishing against the Existence of a Deity, presupposes Principles of the most malignant Influence, and the most unfriendly to Mankind, and which can take place only in a Mind which is utterly lost to Integrity, Benevolence, and Generosity, and even to a rational Sense of its own Interest, or Happiness.

For making this appear, let us consider, that as it was God that brought the Universe into Being, so it is his constant Energy which alone supports and enlivens it, without which, all Nature must immediately dissolve and vanish. To wish, therefore, that there were no God, is, in Effect, to desire the Destruction of the Universe, the Annihilation of all rational and perceptive Beings, the utter Extinction, not only of all future Hopes, but of all present Enjoyments. But let us suppose, according to the Atheistick Pretences, though the Thing is certainly impossible, that the Universe could

could subsist, and Things could go on, just as we find they do, in the natural World, without a Deity and a Providence; yet, how in this Case, would the Happiness, either of human Society, or of particular Persons be provided for? As for the Happiness of Society; whoever knows any Thing of it, must be sensible that it depends chiefly upon the Virtue and Integrity of the several Members, who constitute and compose the Society, from the Attention of all to the common Good, and every one's performing faithfully the Duties of his Rank and Station for the Advancement of it. This is indeed the Strength and Life of the political Body, and the only Thing which can ever make it flourish and prosper. Now upon what Foundation would the Cause of Virtue stand, if deprived of the Support and Aid, which it derives from the Belief of a Deity? It is very plain, that we have the Notions of moral Good, and Evil, and approve the One, and dislike the Other, previously to our Conceptions of the Deity, and that we are determined and led to the Practice of Virtue, by our natural Instincts and Propensions, abstracting from the Consideration of its being positively required by the Supreme

SERM. Lawgiver: And without all Question, the

IV. common Approbations, Instincts, and Affections of Humanity, will be always essential for producing some Acts of Virtue, and in Consequence of these, some small Degree of publick Good among Men, whatever their Speculative Notions, or Opinions are. But after this is allowed, it must also be allowed, if we will not contradict all the Experience of the World, that our natural Approbation and Love of Virtue, are usually so low, that without a constant Care to cultivate and strengthen them, they will soon be borne down by the inferior Principles in our Nature, and never engage us to such virtuous Actions, as are necessary for producing any great Moment of publick Happiness. The Best, frequently find their Relish of moral Excellence to flatten, and their good Affections to decay and languish; insomuch that if there was no Principle in their Minds to revive and enliven their Perceptions of Virtue, and to support and animate them in the Practice of it, they must be in great Danger of falling by Temptations, and would, in several Cases, be unavoidably overcome by them. And as for the Generality of Men, who are at no Pains to discipline and improve their

Minds,

Minds; but give way to the Impulses of **every** Passion which arises in them, it is certain, that if they were left purely under the Influence of their natural Sentiments and Feelings, they would make no Progress in a Course of Virtue, but would sink into a State of great Degeneracy and Corruption, going on from one Degree of Wickedness to a higher, till they introduced into the World a most dismal Scene of Distraction and Confusion, and became insupportable to one another. It is, therefore, altogether necessary that the moral Powers, and good Affections of human Nature, should be diligently improved and strengthened, for rendering them effectual and steady Principles of Virtue and publick Happiness. And if we consider how this is to be done, it seems very plain, that the only Means of doing it, is by fixing in the Minds of Men, a firm Persuasion of a perfectly wise, powerful, good, and righteous Governor of the World; and impressing them with a deep Reverence, Love, and Fear of Him. These Principles are so much of a Kind with our natural Sense of moral Good and Evil, and so perfectly harmonious with it, that if they take a thorough Possession of the Mind, they will

SERM.
IV.

SERM. necessarily assist this Sense, and strongly
 IV. co-operate with it; will easily awaken and
 quicken it, where it begins to droop or
 languish; and restore and re-establish it, if
 any thing at all will do so, where it has
 been almost extinguished or lost; and add
 such Force and Weight to the social and
 generous Propensions of our Nature, as will
 make them operate very powerfully for the
 good Conduct of Life, and the producing
 a great deal of Order, Peace, and Happi-
 nels in the World. And these, indeed,
 are the only Principles, which can govern
 and influence the Minds of Men, so as to
 engage them in the uniform Practice of
 Virtue, and attach them firmly to the In-
 terest of Society. If any one should pre-
 tend, as some have done, that the Want of
 these Principles may be supplied, and that
 the Purposes, for which they are alledged
 to be necessary, may be sufficiently served,
 by the Authority of the Magistrate and hu-
 man Laws, and the fear of those Punish-
 ments which Civil Society inflicts, he would
 certainly, discover but very little Insight in-
 to the Constitution of human Nature. For
 is it not very plain, that many of the most
 important Springs of Action within us,
 which have often the greatest Effect on the
 Affairs

Affairs of the World, lie quite out of the SERM.
Reach of the highest Authority and Power IV.
of Men; and that many, who are most in-
jurious to Society, can, either conceal their
Crimes from the Notice of the Magistrate,
 or, if they are discovered, elude his Cor-
 rection, by some of the various Arts of
 Fraud, or by their great Might and Power?
 So that after all the Assistance which Civil
 Magistracy and Laws afford to Society, if
 Mankind were without all Apprehensions
 of a superior Power, and higher Govern-
 ment, to which they owed subjection, the
 publick Happiness would, undoubtedly,
 stand upon a most precarious Foundation.
 Indeed, in this Case, it would be hardly
 possible for any Government to subsist, and
 to maintain any tolerable Appearance of a
 social State, as Vice would soon become so
 outrageous and impudent, as to bid an
 open Defiance to Authority, to subvert all
 Order, and to throw Men into such a State
 of constant Jealousy, Distrust, and Fear of
 one another, as would make, at least, the
 weaker and more defenceless Part of them,
 rather than to continue in such a Commu-
 nity, to fly to any separate Habitations,
 which they might have, in the wild Dens,
 or lonely Delarts of the Earth.

Thus

SERMON. Thus we see, what Dependance the Happiness of Society hath upon the Faith of a Deity. **IV.** If we now proceed to consider what Connexion the Happiness of particular Persons hath with this same Principle, it is evident, that as Virtue is the great Source of private, as well as publick Happiness, affording Men the purest and most satisfying, the most substantial and durable Joys and Delights, of which they have any Experience, that the Belief of a God, which is the great Security for our persevering and proceeding in a virtuous Course, must be of as great Moment to the Happiness of every Individual, as it is to the Welfare of Society in General. But besides this, it is to be considered, that Men, in their single Capacities, are liable to many Evils and Dangers, from which no Virtue or Prudence upon Earth can deliver them, and are desirous of many Blessings, which are quite out of their own, and all human Power; and for which they must entirely depend upon the Protection and Favour of a superior Being, who is both able and willing to relieve and assist them. The Evils incident to Men in this Life, which often are neither to be prevented, or remedied by them, are various, and well known; such

such as Pain and Sickness of Body, Anxiety of Mind, the Loss of Friends, the Distress or Ruin of publick Affairs, Reproach, Persecution, and the like. Now what should become of us, when exposed to these sufferings, if we had no Confidence in a supreme Protector and Governor? We might have a strong Sense of our Innocence and Integrity; and that would, indeed, free us from the most intolerable Misery of Self-condemnation, and afford us as much Happiness, as our Circumstances would admit of. But still we should find a Load and Burthen sinking and oppressing us, that was not to be thrown off. Death is an Event, which is, certainly, before all of us: But what Support and Consolation could we find against the Apprehension of it, and the Wreck and Dissolution of our Nature by it, if we had no Dependance on the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of our Maker, for carrying us through the Shock, and raising us up in another State? The Consciousness of the highest Virtue would be far from relieving us in this Case: It is plain, that the more we possessed of that inestimable Treasure, the more dreadful would the Thoughts of losing it for ever be to us, and the more should we regret our wretched Fate,

SERM. Fate.

IV.

and poisons the Cup of Mortals, making it impossible to them, if they have any Reflection, to enjoy any solid or stable Tranquillity in their most prosperous Days; depriving them of their most natural Relief and Refuge in Adversity; and filling them at last with Horror and Despair, at the Thoughts, either of utter Extinction; or, some inconvenient, or unhappy Existence which may fall to them, in the infinite Hurries and Changes of Chance, or, into which they may be thrown by the irresistible Force of an undesigned Fatality.

Upon the Whole, it is sufficiently evident, that the Belief of a Deity is a Point of the highest Importance to the Happiness, both of human Society in general, and of every particular Man. Who then that duly considers This, and has any of the common Affections and Feelings of Humanity in him; who has, either any Generosity of Mind and good Wishes for his Kind, or any Desire of his own truest and most extensive Happiness, will ever suffer Prejudices to arise and grow in him against the Existence of a Deity? Who, indeed, that is not abandoned to all Goodness, and lost all Hopes of the Rewards of

it, who, that is not conscious of an extreme Baseness and Depravity, and being odious to himself, concludes of course, that he must still be more odious to him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, can rejoice in the Notion of a Fatherless World, that the Universe is without a Head and Governor, that no Traces of Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness, are to be found in the Constitution of Nature, and the Administration of human Affairs; but that all Things come to pass by Chance, or are in the Hands of a blind invincible Necessity. Surely, if a wise and good Man happened to hesitate about the Existence of God, yet from a Sense which he must have of the great Utility of the Notion of a Deity, and its vast Importance to the Welfare of the World, and the Comfort of Men's Minds, he would be so far from cherishing a Temper of Incredulity in himself, that he would be, above all Things, solicitous to obtain a Stronger Conviction of this Point, and esteem it as the greatest Felicity to be able to satisfy himself, and all Mankind, that such a Being existed as we apprehend the Deity to be; that the Universe is not a fortuitous Jumble, or an Aggregate of Things, without any Coherence,

SERM.
IV.


Hab. i.
13.

SER. M. Coherence, Meaning, or Design; but that

IV.  it was at first formed, and is still governed by infinite Power, directed by infinite Knowledge, Justice, and Goodness. Nay, even bad Men, Those who are most conscious of deserving Ill at the Hands of God, if they act with any Share of common Sense, or Prudence, instead of seeking Shelter for Themselves, in vain Prejudices, and impotent Desires against his Existence, will rather hearken willingly to the Evidences of his Being, and endeavour to find Protection in his Mercy, which, how unworthy soever they may have been, will certainly be extended to Them, upon their unfeigned Submission and Repentance. The Wishing, therefore, that there were no God, is plainly the greatest Stupidity and Sottishness, and can never enter into any Heart, which is not totally perverted, and lost, not only to all the generous Sentiments and Passions of Men, but even to a true Notion of private Interest, or Happiness.

The Application of what has been Discourged, shall be made, 1. With respect to Those, who either deny, or doubt the Existence of a Deity; 2. With respect to Ourselves;

Ourselves, who profess to be persuaded
of it.

With respect to Those, who deny, or
doubt the Existence of God. Such Per-
sons should consider, that the Atheistick
Opinion is so contrary to the Appearances
of the Universe, and to the natural Pre-
sumptions of Men's Minds, upon any at-
tentive View of these Appearances, that
there may be Reason to suspect that it is
rash and ill founded; and that it is plainly
so full of Horror and Mischief, spreading
a most melancholy Gloom over the World,
undermining the main Props and Supports
of Society, Robbing Men of all solid En-
joyment in Life, and leaving them without
Comfort and Hope in Death, that there is,
at least, great Reason to desire that it may
be a Mistake, and that it would be a great
Happiness to be convinced that it really is
so. In Consequence of this Sense of
Things, such Men should be always of a
candid and docile Disposition, ready to re-
view their Notions; and to examine with
Calmness and Impartiality any Arguments
which are offered for the Existence of a
Deity; to treat the Subject, not in the way
of Scoffing and Buffoonry, but with a
Gravity and Seriousness, proportioned to
its

SERMON its great Weight and Importance. This is

IV. what may be justly expected of all who pretend to deny, or call in question, the Being of a God, and would be considered as Men who reflect and reason fairly upon the Argument. If any, after all, should remain incredulous, or doubtful, as to the Existence of a Deity, they may hold their uncomfortable Opinion with more Ease, when they know that they have not fallen into it, through any Negligence or Fault of their own. But the Truth is, it is not to be apprehended, that any Person possessed of the ordinary Abilities of Mankind, and who with Simplicity and Honesty, enquires into the Evidences of the Divine Existence, will either disbelieve it, or have any considerable Doubts about it in his Mind. The very Notion of a Deity falls in so naturally with the strongest Desires of an honest Heart, and the Notices which God has actually given of himself to the World, are so clear, so numerous, and so full, that there probably have never been any, who diligently and earnestly searched after him, who did not, in the Conclusion, find him out. Let Those, therefore, who alledge great Difficulties and Objections against the Belief of a Deity, according

according to an Advice long since given to SERM.
Persons of their Characters, purify their IV.

Hearts from all atheistical and immoral Desires and Affections, and take along with them, in their Disquisitions upon this Subject, the Qualifications which the Light of their Consciences, and Reason of their own Minds must recommend to Them; and the Consequence will be, that their Understandings will soon be illuminated with the Knowledge of the Divinity, and their Doubts of his Existence removed.

2. With respect to Ourselves, who are persuaded of the Existence of the Deity. Let us take care to establish our Minds still farther, in the Belief of this fundamental Point, either by new Arguments, which will readily occur to every attentive and inquisitive Man, or by a Review of the old Ones which have already convinced us of its Truth. And having settled our Faith of it, upon a firm Foundation, let us not be shaken or moved, by any bold Jest, or vain Subtilties of witty and profane Adversaries. If any thing should be offered, that has the Appearance of fair Argumentation against the Being of a God, it ought, indeed to be considered and answered. But as for the Suggestions of Men
I
against

SERM. against it, who have not the Discovery of
 IV. the Truth in View, who mean only to divert themselves in a Matter too serious to be Jested with, or to give Vent to the Spleen and Prejudice of a malevolent Heart, at the Thoughts of Order and Government in the Universe, they may be deservedly treated with utter Neglect and Contempt. Above all, let us take care that our Belief of a Deity be a lively practical Principle, both influencing us in those Duties of an honest Conversation towards Mankind, which we must know to be agreeable to the Will of our Maker and Governor, and producing in us the Affections which terminate in God himself, and which move and exert themselves upon a simple View of his most lovely Perfections; such as Reverence, Love, Gratitude, Joy, Trust, Dependance, and Resignation. And let no one think, that these Affections, or the natural Expressions of them, in Acts of Adoration, Praise, Thanksgiving, and Prayer, can be ever excusably wanting in any who acknowledge a Deity. It is indeed hard to conceive, how the Absence of Them can consist with a firm Belief in God at all; most certainly, it can never consist with any fixed Attention to him, and any strong Sense of
 of

of his Perfections. In a Mind habitually attentive to the Deity, and penetrated, or deeply impressed with a Sense of his perfect Wisdom, Power, Purity, Justice, and Goodness, a Temper of Piety and Devotion must as necessarily arise, as the Affections which we exercise towards our fellow Creatures, or any of the private Desires of our Nature arise and move in us, upon the Presence of their respective Objects. The Relation, or Correspondence between the Affections of Piety, and a lively Perception of the Divine Perfections, is plainly as real, and as much fixed in Nature, as That between any of our lower Appetites and Senses, and the immediate Influence of their Objects upon us, is. As we would not, therefore, notwithstanding our professing in Words to believe and acknowledge a God, be thought in Truth to deny him; as we would not, at least, have our Belief of him, to be only a cold and lifeless Assent of the Understanding, which is good for nothing; it concerns us, to raise and animate, by serious Reflection and Meditation, our Persuasion of his Existence, so as to render it an effectual Principle, first of a rational Devotion, and after that, of all the other Branches of Virtue in us.

SERMON.

IV.

SERM. And this is a Point, which may with the
 IV. greater Reason be urged and insisted upon,
 as there are at present several Persons, who
 pretend to be convinced of the Being of a
 God, who yet seem to have no Notion of
 any Homage which is due immediately to
 him, from his intelligent Creatures, who
 probably think it a mean Superstition to
 cultivate an inward Temper of Devotion
 towards him, and to express it in any ex-
 ternal Acts of religious Worship. In rea-
 lity, upon whatever Foundation such Men
 may call Themselves Believers of a Deity, it
 is not to be imagined that they can ever have
 a just and lively Faith in the true God of
 the Universe, a Being infinite in Power,
 Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness, who
 is both the natural and moral Governor of
 Mankind: If indeed they had such a Faith,
 one may venture to say that it is impossible,
 while they continue the Beings that they
 are, that they should not with the highest
 Veneration, Esteem, and Love, contem-
 plate the Character of the Deity; that they
 should not be full of a Sense of his Ex-
 cellence and Goodness, and abound in all
 becoming Expressions of Praise and Grati-
 tude towards him, of Trust, Confidence,
 and joyful Hope in him, and of Submission
 and

and Resignation to him; as well as ben-
deavour to imitate his Purity, Justice, and
Mercy, in their Behaviour among Men.
Whoever, therefore, say that they believe in
God, should justify their Faith in him, by
glorifying him as God; both with the sincere
Homage of their Hearts, and the Integrity
and Purity of their outward Conversation.
To Him be all Glory, both now, and for
ever. Amen.

SERMON

IV.

and to expel him, and to ex-
ternal Acts of religious Worship. In res-
pect, upon whatever Foundation such Men
may call themselves Believers of a Deity, it
is not to be imagined that they can ever have
any just and lively Faith in the true God of
the Universe, a Being infinite in Power,
Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness, who
is both the natural and moral Governor of
the World. If indeed they had such a Faith,
they would venture to say that it is impossible
while they concern the Beings that they
are, that they should not with the highest
veneration, esteem, and Love, contem-
plate the Character of the Deity; that they
should not be full of a Sense of his Ex-
cellence and Goodness, and abound in all
becoming Expressions of Praise and Grat-
itude towards him, of Trust, Confidence,
and joyful Hope in him, and of Submission
and

1811
SERMON V.

The Sanctity and moral Govern-
ment of God

HAB. I. 13.

*Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil,
and canst not look on Iniquity.*

SERM.
V.

THE Appearances of Power, De-
sign, and Wisdom, are so very
clear and visible in the Constitu-
tion of the World, that almost All who
consider it with any Attention, acknow-
ledge it to be the Work of an almighty in-
telligent Agent. So far several Persons,
who are averse enough to the Notion of
any superior Nature in the Universe, ad-
vance in the Principles of *Theism*, merely
by the Force of an Evidence, which is not
to be contradicted, or evaded by them.
And such Men can the more easily recon-
cile themselves to the Belief of Power, Ac-
tivity, and Intelligence in the Origin and
Cause

Cause of Things, as they apprehend that these Properties imply no moral Dominion or Government over Mankind, that they do not determine the Being who possesses them, either to approve, or disapprove of one sort of Affections, or one certain Tenor of Conduct, more than of their Contraries, but leave him quite indifferent to what is called Virtue and Vice among Men; so that all Notions of deserving well or ill at his Hands, and all Expectations of Rewards, or Punishments from him, in Consequence of our Behaviour, are altogether vain and delusive.

And indeed if we conceived the Deity to be only a powerful intelligent Being, without any moral Qualities and Perfections, let his natural Power and Understanding be supposed ever so independent and infinite, it is certain that his Character would be but very little interesting to us. We might easily see that such a Being could make us happy or miserable, as he thought fit; but as we supposed him to be, void of all Sanctity, Righteousness, and moral Goodness; that there was no Principle in him which could move him to regard our Temper and Behaviour, or make him either pleased, or displeased with our Conduct, in whatever

SERMON. Way we ordered it, we should think out-

IV. selves to be no way concerned with him, and never act either from the Love, or Fear of him at all. The natural Attributes of God are absolutely necessary to the Perfection of his Nature, to his being an Agent, to his Creating and Governing the World at all; but taken alone, they are far from finishing his Character: What compleats his Glory, and exhibits him to us as the most perfect Agent, and renders him, in the most affecting Sense our Governor, is his possessing, in Conjunction with the highest Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, all moral Excellencies, and particularly a perfect *Sanctity* or *Holiness* of Nature, which sets him at the greatest Distance from all moral Evil, which makes him necessarily to approve of Virtue, and adhere to it in his own Conduct and Administration, and likewise to approve and love it in his rational Creatures, and to disapprove and hate the Contrary in them. It is plain, that if this Property belongs to God, as it must greatly heighten our Idea of his Excellence, so it naturally points him out as the Governor of Mankind, considered as rational and moral Agents; as a Being, who will certainly observe and animadvert upon our Temper
and

and Conduct, who will be pleased with our Goodness, and offended with our Wickedness, and make us most sensibly feel the Effects of his Approbation, or Condemnation. Now as it must be a Matter of the greatest Consequence to be convinced that this Perfection of Sanctity, including a Discernment, Approbation, and Love of Virtue, and a Perception, Dislike, and Hatred of Vice, really belongs to the Divine Nature, I shall, in the remaining Part of this Discourse, First, Consider upon what Grounds this Perfection is to be ascribed to God; and afterwards make some important Reflections, which will offer themselves to us upon this Subject.

As for the Grounds or Reasons, upon which this Perfection of Sanctity is to be ascribed to the Deity: Some have thought that the Holiness, Goodness, and all the other moral Perfections of God, have a necessary Connexion with his natural Attributes, and may be deduced from the Idea of his Independency, almighty Power, and infinite Knowledge; but as the Reasoning which is commonly used upon this Argument, whatever Force there may be really in it, is by no Means clear and convincing

SERM. cing to many who have considered it, I
 V. shall not here enter into it, but endeavour
 to prove the *Sanctity* of the Divine Nature, by some other Considerations more familiar and natural, and of more easy Comprehension to any plain attentive Mind.

As we are almost necessarily led to form our Ideas of the Powers and Perfections of all superior Natures, by some Resemblance; or Analogy, to what we esteem most excellent and perfect in Ourselves; let us, first, consider, whether there is any Thing in our own Constitution, which may be the Foundation of our ascribing the Perfection of Sanctity to the supreme Being. It is plain, that among several Powers and Principles implanted in our Minds, we have one which gives us the Ideas of Virtue and Merit, in certain Dispositions and Actions of rational Agents, and of Vice and Ill-desert, in others of them; which makes us to esteem and delight in the one sort, and to condemn and abhor the other. This is a Fact which seems to be as certain from our Consciousness and Experience, as that we have a bodily Eye to distinguish between Light and Darkness, or a Taste which furnishes us with the different Sensations of Sweet and Bitter. And when
 we

we reflect upon this Faculty, and consider SERM.
its Use in our Constitution, we cannot but V.
conclude it to be the highest and most im-
portant one belonging to us, which most
eminently distinguishes us from all the in-
ferior Orders of Creatures in this World,
which gives us a Notion of an intrinsic
Dignity, or Worth in our Nature, and of
our advanced Rank in the Scale of Exist-
ence and Perfection, and which, in Con-
sequence of this, proves a Spring of such
noble and stable Pleasures to us, as are in-
finitely preferable to all our other Enjoy-
ments. Now as it is this Faculty, which
so greatly exalts and felicitates our Nature,
so it seems to be altogether necessary to the
Perfection and Happiness of the higher Be-
ings in the Universe, and even of the first
and supreme Being himself. Without it,
He might be supposed to be possessed of
Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, in infinite
Degrees; and as these would make him to
contrive and effect the greatest possible
Happiness which he could communi-
cate to his Creatures, he would certainly
be an Object of high Approbation to us,
and to all other Beings constituted with
such a Power of discerning and esteeming
moral Worth and Excellence, as we have.
But to himself, he could be no Object of

SERMON Approbation at all, as he would want the
 V. Power of perceiving and relishing his own
 Worth and Perfection; he would indeed
 enjoy the Pleasure which resulted immedi-
 ately from the Exercise of his Goodness,
 but he could not reflect upon his Conduct
 with any Complacency, nor have a Con-
 sciousness of merited Esteem and Love,
 which yet, according to the best Appre-
 hensions that we can have of the Matter,
 is the principal Source of Satisfaction and
 Enjoyment.

But besides this Reason for ascribing the
 Perfection of Sanctity to the Deity, from
 the Idea which we naturally form of his
 Dignity and Felicity, in Correspondence to
 what constitutes our own, his very giving
 us the Power of discerning moral Good and
 Evil, and of approving the One, and con-
 demning the Other, is a clear Proof that
 he must have it, or something of a superior
 Nature, analogous to it, in himself. There
 is hardly any Maxim which the Mind more
 easily and firmly assents to than this, that
 whatever Excellency, or Perfection is in
 any Effect, the same must be still more
 eminently in its Cause. Since, therefore,
 the Deity has implanted in us this noble
 Faculty of moral Discernment, is it not
 certain,

certain, that ity on some Principle corresponding to it, however vastly more perfect, must be in his own Nature? If this were not the Case, might we not be said to be more perfect than our Maker; to be more compleatly furnished for attaining to what we must take to be the best State of intelligent Agents, than he is, from whom our Beings, and all our Powers and Capacities are derived? The Absurdity and Sottishness of supposing the Author of Nature to be defective in any Perfections which he communicates to his Creatures, is justly exposed and reprov'd by the Psalmist, *Understand ye brutish among the People, and ye Fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the Ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the Eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall he not know?* It may, perhaps, however be objected against this Argument, that as there are several Powers and Qualities, accounted Perfections and Virtues in our Constitution, which are universally allowed to have no place in the Deity, who implanted them in us, so it cannot be inferred from our having a Sense of moral Good and Evil given to us, that therefore the same must be in our Creator. But though we must not conclude from

SERM.

V.

Psalm
xciv.
8-10.

SERM. our having external Senses, bodily Appetites and Passions, and the like, that our Maker must have them also; because these Things, though necessary to the Purposes of this Life, and of great Use to us in the present infirm State of our Being, yet are really Arguments of our Imperfection, and therefore not, without the grossest Absurdity, to be attributed to the first and highest Being in the Universe, who has Powers in him, which most perfectly contain the Advantages of these lower Faculties belonging to us, and set him infinitely above the Want and Use of them; yet from our possessing those Things which are absolute Perfections, which not only serve the noblest Purposes which we are capable of in this Life, but are fit to go along with us into any higher Scenes for which we may be designed, and which seem to be worthy of the most excellent spiritual Natures, and are indeed the greatest Accomplishments that we can conceive any Beings to have, such as Intelligence, a Sense of Virtue and Vice, and a Disposition of Benevolence, we may very justly infer that our Creator has either these Perfections in Kind, though in an infinitely more exalted Degree in himself; or some Principles of a superior Nature,

ture, correspondent to them, which give SERM.
him the most perfect Knowledge of all V.

Things, the most lively Perceptions of the
Dignity and Loveliness of Virtue, and of
the Baseness and Deformity of Vice, and
the strongest and most fixed Determination
to promote the Happiness of the Universe.

This, I say, is a Conclusion, which we
may justly make, in virtue of the Principle
already mentioned, that every derived Per-
fection must be most eminently in the
Cause, or Source of it; and is besides ne-
cessary to be admitted, for our forming an
intelligible Notion of the Deity, and our
receiving any Assistance in the Exercise of
Virtue from the Belief of his Existence,
and the Contemplation of his Character
and Example.

Farther, it is plain that God is a holy
Being, that he has a Perception of moral
Good and Evil, and *loves Righteousness,*
and *bates Iniquity*, from his Conduct and
Administration of the Affairs of Mankind.
His giving us moral Powers and Faculties,
may, in a different View, from that in
which we considered it before, be men-
tioned as a Proof of his Regard to the Dif-
ference between Virtue and Vice, and his
approving the one, and disliking the other.

His

SERM. His fixing us in a Situation in the World, which affords noble Opportunities to our moral Powers of exerting Themselves, and improving it to a great Degree of Perfection, and in which they must always operate in some Measure, is a farther Argument of the Purity and Holiness of his Nature. And more particularly, his establishing a Connexion between Virtue and Happiness, and between Vice and Misery; his even making Virtue as Virtue, and Vice as Vice, respectively the Causes of the greatest Good or Ill which happen to Men, clearly proves his Sanctity; that he knows the Dignity and Worth of Virtue, and the Baseness and ill Desert of Wickedness, and that he is the Friend and Patron of the One, and the Adversary and Avenger of the Other; that he has actually begun, and is exercising a righteous Government in his present Dispensations towards Mankind. That this is really the Case, that according to the natural Course and Tendency of Things, there is a Connexion between Virtue and Happiness, and between Vice and Misery, must be obvious to every Man of Reflection and Observation; and though it is certain, that this original Order established in Nature, is frequently broken and interrupted

rupted in some Measure, yet still it takes effect so far, as to make the Condition of the Righteous, beyond all Comparifon, preferable to that of the Wicked, at least for the most part, even in point of Interest, or true Enjoyment; nay so far, as to give good Men always the highest Pleasure which they can have any Experience of, from the Consciousness of their Integrity, and the Joy, Peace, Hope, and Confidence in God, which that inspires; from the Protection and Assistance which their Virtue usually procures them, even from the Generality of the World, and the Congratulation, Esteem, and Friendship, which it certainly gains them from all the wiser and better Part of Men; and so far, as to expose the Wicked, in many Instances at least, to the most dreadful Misery which Men can endure, from a simple View of their own Depravity and Guilt, and the Remorse, Anguish, Shame, and Terror, which thereupon arise in their Minds; from the Infamy of their Characters, and the Resentment and Indignation, which their Enormities draw upon Them, not only from the Wise and Virtuous, but from the greatest Part of Mankind. From all which, though we cannot infer the

SERMON. Perfection of moral Government and distributive Justice in the present Conduct of human Affairs, yet we must at least discern such clear Characters of Sanctity, and such plain Beginnings, and such a general Plan of a righteous Government, in the Administration of them, as are sufficient to convince us that the Maker and Governor of the World, is by no means indifferent to Virtue and Vice, but that he knows the essential Difference between them, and countenances and supports the Cause of the One, and discourages and opposes that of the Other; that *the Eyes of the Lord, as the Psalmist speaks, are upon the Righteous, and his Face is set against the Evil-Doer.*

Pf. xxxiv.
15, 16.

These Considerations seem to have sufficient Evidence for satisfying all, who carefully and impartially attend to them, of the Sanctity of the Divine Nature, and have always had so much Force, as to make Mankind very generally agree in ascribing this Attribute or Property to the Deity. There have been, comparatively, but extremely Few, who have had any Notion at all of an original Supreme Being in the Universe, from whom all other Things are derived, who have not from the very Bent and Bias of their Nature, from the most obvious

obvious Suggestions of their Minds, upon any serious Review of their own Powers and Excellencies, concluded the first Cause and Maker of all, to be perfectly holy and righteous. This Conception of the Deity is interwoven in all the Schemes, or Systems of Religion, which any where obtain in the World. It lies at the Bottom of all the Worship and Service, which any Men rationally offer to God; it is pre-supposed, even in those Superstitious Rites, which deluded Mortals make use of, for gaining his Favour, or averting his Displeasure. The Forms of Oaths, without which the great Ends of Society could not be carried on, contain either express or tacit Acknowledgments of the Sanctity and Equity of the Divine Administration: And indeed it is plain, that if God was not believed to be a holy and just Being, all Appeals, and all Applications to him, in any Manner, or Form whatsoever, would soon appear even to the most Thoughtless, to be quite impertinent and foolish. I shall conclude this Part of the Discourse, with some Passages of Scripture, containing clear Assertions, and lively Illustrations of the perfect Holiness and Righteousness of the Deity, to the Truth of which, all unprejudiced

SERMON. Minds, will, most probably, immediately assent. *The Lord, says Moses, is a God of*

Deut.
xxxii. 4.

Psalms. v.
4, 5, 6.

Psalms. xi.
7.

Isa. vi.
3.

Job.
xxxiv. 10.
11, 12.

Truth, and without Iniquity, Just and Right is he. Thou art of purer Eyes, says the Prophet in the Text, than to behold Evil, and can'st not look on Iniquity, without a Dislike and Detestation of it. Thou art not a God, says the Psalmist, that hast Pleasure in Wickedness; neither shall Evil dwell with thee; The Foolish shall not stand in thy Sight, thou hatest all Workers of Iniquity; Thou shalt destroy them that speak Leasing: The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful Man.

The righteous Lord, says he, loveth Righteousness, and his Countenance becometh the Upright. Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, say the Angels in the Vision of Isaiah, the whole Earth is full of his Glory. I shall only add the Representation which Elihu gives of the Purity and Justice of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all Things, for the Truth of which he appeals to the inward Sense and Conviction of every reasonable Man. Therefore hearken unto me, ye Men of Understanding; Far be it from God, that he should do Wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit Iniquity: For the Work of a Man shall be rendered unto him, and cause every Man to find
according

according to his Ways. Yea, surely, God SERM.
V
will not do wickedly, neither will the Al-
mighty pervert Judgment.

I shall now proceed to some useful Reflections, which will naturally arise upon this Subject.

I. The perfect Sanctity of the Deity lays the justest Foundation for our highest Esteem, Reverence, and Adoration of him. We are so constituted, that we cannot but approve and admire moral Worth and Goodness wherever it appears: Even the limited Excellence which the Creatures are possessed of, commands a high Degree of our Respect and Veneration. The noble Sense of Virtue and Vice which prevails in many Men, and the Progress which they make in solid Goodness, never fail to make us exceedingly revere, and honour Them. The superior Dignity, the higher Attainments and Improvements of Beings of a more exalted Rank in the Creation, draw from us a proportionably larger Measure of Reverence and Praise. How then must our Minds be affected with the original transcendent Purity and Righteousness of the Creator himself, who has in his Nature the Standard of all Dignity and Worth, and the Spring of all Goodness; who has

SERM. implanted in the various Orders of intelligent Agents, all those Powers which make them capable of any real Excellence, and from whom all the Virtues and good Qualities which we so much admire and applaud in them, are ultimately derived? Surely, the Contemplation of this eternal Source of moral Beauty and Excellence, from whence every thing that is most becoming, lovely, conspicuous, and great in the Universe proceeds, must most wonderfully strike us, and inspire into us all possible Reverence, Honour, and Adoration of the Deity. It is indeed impossible, if we really believe the independent, immutable, and most eminent Holiness of God, and have withal any just or lively Sense of it in our Minds, not to be filled with the most respectful and honourable Sentiments and Affections towards him, and not to be disposed to give him the Glory and Praise which are due to him on that Account. *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints: Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name; for thou only art Holy. Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, says the Psalmist, and give Thanks at the Remembrance of*

Rev. xv.

3, 4:

Ps. xxx.

4

of his Holiness. The Celebration of this SERM.
glorious Attribute of the Divinity, is a prin-
cipal Part of that Worship which is offered
to him, by the blessed Inhabitants of Hea-
ven, who, according to the Representation
which we have of them in the prophetical
Visions; *cease not, Day and Night, saying,*
holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who
was, and is, and art to come. Rev. iv. 8.

2. From the essential and immutable
Holiness of the Divine Nature, we may
evidently see the Vanity and Folly of all
that Superstition, which substitutes as the
Ground of Men's Acceptance with God,
any Thing different from the Practice of
moral Piety and Virtue. For this being
the only Thing that corresponds to the Pu-
rity of God, and the only Qualification
which he can have a Regard to in rational
Agents, whoever want this Qualification,
and yet endeavour to recommend them-
selves to his Favour, plainly attempt what
is quite impossible; as much so, as if they
undertook to suspend a Mountain in the
Air; or to raise a great Building without a
solid Foundation. This, indeed, seems to
be so clear a Case, when the Holiness of the
Deity is once admitted, that none but very
inconsiderate Men, or Persons extremely

SERM. prejudiced, and willing to be deceived, can
 V. Be under any Mistake about it.

3. From the Sanctity of the Divine Nature, there arises the strongest Presumption of future Rewards and Punishments. Because as this Property of the Deity implies his having a just Sense of the Loveliness and Merit of Virtue, and of the Turpitude and Ill-desert of Vice; and as it must necessarily interest him in Behalf of the one, and set him against the other, and make him fully declare his Sentiments of Men, according as they are morally Good, or Evil, in his Eyes; as in Consequence of this, he has actually marked out in the Constitution and Order of Nature, a Scheme of a righteous Government, which always takes Effect so far, as to shew us very plainly how he is affected and engaged with respect to Virtue and Vice, though by several Accidents it is hindered from attaining to its full Accomplishment and Perfection in this World; we may conclude that this same Attribute of God will prompt him to protect and support the Cause of Virtue, and to express his Enmity to Vice, still more remarkably in another State; that the Time will come, when *he will bring forth his Righteousness as the Light, and his Judgment*

Government of God.

ment as the Noon-day; when that pure and just Administration which is already visibly begun, and carried a considerable Length, shall be finished and compleated, and every Conscience shall see, and every Tongue confess its absolute Equity and Impartiality; when the accidental Obstacles to the natural Tendency and Operation of Virtue and Vice, arising only from the State of this World, being removed, these Qualities, under the immediate Direction and Government of the Deity, will uniformly exert their full Force and Influence on those in whom they inhere; the one making all the Good compleatly blessed, and raising them to a State of the highest Dignity and Glory, and the other involving the whole World of the Wicked in extreme Misery, and overwhelming them with utter Disgrace and Confusion.

4. The Consideration of the Holiness of God may be justly Matter of Terror to all impenitent Sinners, and make the best of us ashamed and humbled before him, from a Consciousness of our manifold Defects and Imperfections. As the Purity of God must necessarily raise in him a perfect Opposition and Aversion to all moral Defilement and Corruption; as it makes him to

hate

SERMON. *hate all Workers of Iniquity, and to be*

V. *angry with the Wicked every Day; the*

Pfal. vii. *Thoughts of it may, certainly, alarm and*

II. *terrify all, who are conscious of any wilful*

Pfal. xc. *Wickedness or Immorality. For who know-*

II. *eth the Power of God's Anger, which can*

excite Horrors and Pains in the Minds of

Sinners, intense and durable, beyond all

Conception and Imagination? If we are

afraid of falling under the Displeasure of

the Great and Powerful of this World, who

yet, when they have done their worst, can

Heb. x. 31. *only kill the Body, how much more fear-*

Luke xii. *ful must it be to fall into the Hands of the*

4. *ever-living and omnipotent God, who after*

he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell?

Happy surely will it be (if it should hap-

pen to be the Case) for any of those, on

whom the more gentle and ingenuous Mo-

tives of Religion have lost their Force, to

be touched and rouzed by this most awak-

ening and violent Consideration, to be per-

suaded even by the Terrors of the Lord, by

their Apprehensions of the Divine Holiness

and Justice, to stop short in their evil

Course, and to make a Retreat in time

from the astonishing Danger which lies be-

fore them. But the Thoughts of the Di-

vine Sanctity may, not only inject Terror

into

into the Minds of the Wicked, but cover SER. V.
the best of us with some Confusion, when

we reflect on our many Failures and Mis-
carriages. *Who can say, I have made my* Prov. xx.

Heart clean, I am pure from Sin? This is ^{9.}

an Honour which mere Humanity never
attains to, in any one Instance, in this
World. Those who have made the clearest
Escape from the Pollutions of the World,
and have arrived at the greatest Height of
Virtue, are usually not the least sensible of
remaining Infirmities and Imperfections;
and these, though they need not, as they
are involuntary, greatly disturb them, nor
ever destroy their Confidence in God, yet,
may always hide Pride from their Eyes,
and give them a mortifying and humbling
Conception of Themselves, in the Sight of
an omniscient and infinitely holy Being,
who sees many more Defects and Blemishes
in them, than they themselves can know;
and make every one of Them, with the
greatest Seriousness, to pray in the Words

of David, *Enter not into Judgment with* Psal. cxliii.
thy Servant, for in thy Sight shall no Man ^{2.}

living be justified. Who can understand his —xix. 12.
Errors? Cleanse thou me from secret Faults.

5. The Consideration of the Divine Sanc-
tity is a most powerful and urgent Motive

to

SERMON to the Exercise of all Virtue; S When a
 W Man, who from the Dictates of his own
 Conscience is already convinced of the great
 Dignity and Excellence of moral Goodness,
 and that he is naturally under an Obliga-
 tion to adhere to it, comes to find that this
 same Thing, that has so much intrinsick
 Worth, and the Practice of which is bound
 upon him by the Law of his Nature, is
 likewise most strictly required by the su-
 preme *Lawgiver, who is able to save, and*
to destroy; that it is the only Thing agree-
 able to his Nature, and absolutely necessary
 to render a Man acceptable to him; this,
 surely, must engage him to practise it with
 the utmost Zeal and Diligence. Indeed
 though a Man had so little Generosity, as
 to be no way moved or affected with the
 natural Amiability of Virtue, yet if he is
 but persuaded, that the Purity of God ne-
 cessarily determines him to take Cognizance
 of the moral Behaviour of Men, and will
 not permit him to receive any into his Fa-
 vour, but upon the Condition of universal
 Righteousness, he must be above all things
 solicitous to raise all virtuous Affections in
 his Heart, and to exercise them uniformly
 in his Conversation and Behaviour in the
 World. It is, at least, certain, that none

Jam. iv.
12.

who has a just Notion of the Holiness of the Deity, can be otherwise disposed, without discovering, not only a great Defect in all good Principles, but even a stupid Inclination as to the Point of his private Interest, or Gain. But the Consideration of the Sanctity of the Divine Nature, must strongly prompt and urge all, who have any Ingenuity and Generosity of Mind, to the Practice of Virtue, in another Way. It is plain that we are formed so, as to desire Esteem and Honour from other intelligent Beings, and that the higher their Rank and Dignity are, the more valuable their Approbation appears to us, and the more earnestly do we desire and seek it. The good Opinion of the more discerning and worthy of our own Species, is always coveted, as one of the greatest Instances of Happiness which can be obtained in this World, by all who retain any native Probity and Goodness of Heart. The Esteem of Intelligences of a superior Order in the Universe, is still more desirable and delightful: And the Approbation of the great Father of all derived intelligent Natures, the Fountain of Reason and of all Excellence, is, in the highest Degree, valuable and joyful. Now as the Sanctity of God cannot but abhor all

moral

SE R M. moral Evil in Men, and can approve of
 V. nothing in them but real Virtue, true Ho-
 nesty and Goodness of Heart and Life; whoever desire (and who that have the least Sense of Honour, or the least Spark of laudable Ambition, do not?) to gain the Approbation of this great Being, to stand fair in the Estimation of this most infallible Judge of Merit, *the God of Knowledge, by whom Actions are weighed*; who will do Justice to every Character, must hate all moral Turpitude, and keep at the utmost Distance from it, and cultivate an incorruptible Integrity, and endeavour to abound and excel in all good Qualities.

6. Lastly, The Sanctity of God is to be the great Object of our Imitation. As it is the distinguishing Honour of Man, above all other Creatures in this lower World, to be formed in the Image of God, to be capable by a good Use and Application of his higher Powers and Affections, of partaking, in some Degree, of the Perfection of his Creator, it must, certainly, be the Ambition and Care of all, who have any Respect for the Dignity of the human Nature, any Reverence for themselves, or any Notion of what is Decent, Generous, and Manly, to attain to as near a Resemblance

as they can have of the Divinity, from SERMO
whence their truest Glory and Felicity re- V.

And as the Holiness of God is a most glorious Part of that Image of him, which we may bear, we should with the utmost Zeal and Diligence endeavour to resemble and imitate him in this Property; by cultivating and improving our natural Relish of Virtue, and strengthening and increasing our Aversion to Vice; by rendering our Sense of moral Good and Evil, so acute, quick, and vigorous, that it may easily direct and govern our Conversation; putting us upon the earnest Pursuit of all Things worthy and becoming, which tend to purify, ennoble, and exalt our Nature, and restraining us effectually from whatever is corrupt and low, which would debase, vilify, and depress us; and making us highly to reverence and love eminent Virtue in whatever Character and Station it is found, and to countenance, favour, and support all good Men, as far as we can, according to their Worth, and to express a noble Resentment and Detestation of flagrant and incorrigible Wickedness, even though it should be attended with the greatest outward Pomp, and to discourage, oppose, and punish all the Bad, with a Severity proportioned to the

I Depravity

SERM. Depravity and Iniquity of their Conduct.

V. Thus must we endeavour to attain, accord-

ing to our Measure and Capacity, to some Similitude of the perfect Purity and Righteousness of the Deity, if we would be thought to have any real Greatness of Mind in us; or, if we would answer the Intention of Christianity, which designs to bring all its

2 Pet. i. 4. Professors to a *Participation of a Divine*

Eph. iv. 24. *Nature, to make them put on the New Man, which, after God, is created in Righteousness and true Holiness; to render them*

Matt. v. 48. *Perfect, even as their Father who is in Hea-*

1 Pet. i. 15. *ven is Perfect, and Holy, in all manner of*

Conversation, as he who hath called them is Holy.

SER.

SERMON VI.

The Nature, rational Grounds, and
necessary Qualifications of Prayer.

PSALM LXV. 2.

*O thou that bearest Prayer, unto thee shall
all Flesh come.*

AS the common Light of Nature, SERM.
VI.
agreeably to this Intimation of the
Psalmist, has taught Mankind very
generally to look upon Prayer, as a neces-
sary and important Duty; as in all the Re-
velations which God has given to the World,
it is frequently and earnestly recommended;
as our Saviour has required it, both by his
Precepts, and Example; as at the same
Time, it is a Thing, concerning which,
Men have been apt to run into great Errors
and Extremes, many having quite over-ra-
ted it, and laid by far too mighty a Stress
on it, while some others, by much the
L smaller

SERM. smaller Number indeed, have utterly con-
 VI. temned it, and been altogether indifferent
 and negligent about it; it must, certainly,
 be very useful to us, to fix a true Notion of
 this Duty in our Minds, to have a clear
 View of the rational Grounds of it, and of
 the Methods which may be necessary to
 make our Performance of it, effectually an-
 swer its End. I propose, therefore, in the
 following Discourse, *First*, To explain a
 little this Duty of Prayer. *Secondly*, To
 inquire into the Reasons, for which it is
 to be attended to, and performed by us.
Thirdly, To consider what Qualifications
 may be requisite on our part, for rendering
 our Prayers acceptable and successful. After
 which, I shall conclude with a few gene-
 ral Reflections upon this whole Subject.

I. I shall briefly explain this Duty of
 Prayer. Prayer, according to the strict
 Sense of the Word, and the original No-
 tion of the Thing, is in General no more
 than the offering our Desires, or Petitions
 to God. Some other Things, indeed, have
 for a long time, by Custom, been compre-
 hended under the Word; such as Confes-
 sion of our Sins, Adoration of the Majesty
 of God, and Praise and Thanksgiving for
 his

his Mercies: And as these several Acts of Devotion may, in the Nature of Things, very properly accompany the Petitions or Requests which we address to our Maker, and should indeed generally go along with them, they, together with these Petitions, fitly enough furnish us with a large and complex Notion of Prayer. But for treating the Subject more distinctly, I shall confine myself at present, to the strict and original Notion of Prayer, as it signifies the laying our Desires before God, or, in the Apostle's Phrase, *the making our Requests known unto him*. Phil. vi. 6. For opening up which

Duty more clearly, it must be observed, 1. That God is the Object to whom we are to address our Desires, or Requests. He, having all Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness, originally, independently, and immutably in himself, and being alone the Creator and Governor of the World, is most perfectly qualified, both to hear our Prayers, and to grant us any reasonable Requests which we offer to him, and according to the most obvious Dictates of Nature, must ever be the ultimate Object of all the Dependance and Hope of Mankind. As for praying to other Beings, whom we do not certainly

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 VI. temned it, and been altogether indifferent
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Duty more clearly, it must be observed, 1. That God is the Object to whom we are to address our Desires, or Requests. He, having all Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness, originally, independently, and immutably in himself, and being alone the Creator and Governor of the World, is most perfectly qualified, both to hear our Prayers, and to grant us any reasonable Requests which we offer to him, and according to the most obvious Dictates of Nature, must ever be the ultimate Object of all the Dependence and Hope of Mankind. As for praying to other Beings, whom we do not certainly

know to be capable of hearing and relieving us, and if we did know that they were, to whom we have no Authority or Command from the supreme Lord and Governor of all Things, to address ourselves; as it is a manifest Departure from the Simplicity both of natural Religion, and of Christianity, so it has always been, and, in the natural Order of Things, must ever be attended with very inconvenient and mischievous Consequences in the greatest Part of Men; distracting their Minds, and dividing their Affections, in the Times of their Devotion, when they should be more especially calm and recollected; diminishing their Regard to the God and Father of the Universe, and drawing them into an unjust Reliance on some of his Creatures, and into numberless Absurdities and Superstitions in the Devotions which they present to these, which are often substituted by them in the room of true Integrity and Virtue, and sometimes intended as a Compensation for the vilest and most shocking Acts of Wickedness. 2. As to the Matter of our Prayers, or the Things which we are to desire from God. These, in general, are such Things as are agreeable to his Will. And as we know that God designs the Happiness

ness both of our Souls and Bodies, and has made us not only for high Enjoyment in the other World, but for some Share of it in this, we may ask of him both inward and outward Blessings, the Happiness not only of the Life which is to come, but of That which now is; but with this Difference, that we must be much more earnest and solicitous to obtain spiritual and eternal Blessings, than those which relate only to our Bodies, and our Welfare in this present State. For the Blessings of the Soul, and of Eternity, such as Wisdom, Integrity, and Virtue, being invariably and permanently good to us, and the highest Treasure that we can possess, we can never exceed in our Desires of them, nor ever be over-diligent in the Use of any rational Means for acquiring and increasing them; whereas external Advantages, and what is commonly accounted the Happiness of this World, consisting in great Degrees of Riches, Honours, Power, and such like, being at least as often hurtful, as they are beneficial to Men, and we being no proper Judges of the Measures of them, which would really conduce to our Good, we must be always cool and moderate in our Desires and Pursuits of these Things, and

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beg

The Nature, Grounds, and

SERMON. beg of God to withhold from us those Degrees of them, which he knows we should abuse, however agreeable they might be to the fond and foolish Passions which sometimes arise in us, and to grant us only such a Portion of them as we may be capable of improving well, and may be most consistent with our Progress in Virtue, and our truest Happiness. This Order the natural Sense and Reason of our Minds, and likewise the Pattern which our Saviour has given us in the Prayer which is called his, require us to observe in our Petitions, or Requests for the different good Things, which we expect from our Maker. 3. As to the Meaning and Intention, with which we are to offer our Petitions to God. We are not to have it in our Thoughts, that we can ever communicate to God, any Knowledge of our Wants, which he has not before we mention them; or, that we can extort from him, by Solicitation and Importunity, any Favours, which either it would not become him to bestow, or which from the essential Purity and Goodness of his Nature, he is not always ready to confer upon his rational Creatures, when they are duly prepared and qualified for them. To think that we could ever do

any Thing of this sort, would be a very weak and rash Imagination, as well as a great Dishonour and Affront to the supreme Being. But what we can rationally propose by offering our Desires to the Deity, is to declare our absolute Dependence upon, and Submission to him our Maker, and natural and rightful Governor; to profess the entire Confidence which we have of his Doing always what is best and fittest for us, as well as the whole World of intelligent Agents; and to render Ourselves still the more worthy Objects of his Approbation and Beneficence, by our exercising and exerting, and thereby raising and strengthening the good Dispositions of our Hearts, under an immediate and lively Sense of his Presence, and particularly by our Compliance with that Instance of his Will, requiring our Addresses to him, as an Expression of our Duty, and a Condition of partaking of his Favours. From hence it plainly follows, which is the last Thing that I shall take Notice of, for explaining this Duty of Prayer, that in all our Petitions or Requests to God, which have any Sense or Meaning in them, some inward Principles and Acts of Mind are necessarily presupposed, or included: Such as a clear Con-

SERM.

VI.

viction of our Ignorance, and Impotence, and total Insufficiency to procure and establish our own Happiness; a firm Belief of the perfect Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Goodness of the great Creator and Sovereign of the Universe, enabling and disposing him to relieve and supply the Wants of his Creatures, and to communicate to them any Blessings, which they can justly claim, or expect from him; and lastly, an humble serious Application to this supreme Governor of the World for his Favour, with an assured Persuasion of obtaining it, in such Degrees and Instances, as will contribute most effectually to our true Felicity, when we faithfully endeavour to deserve it at his Hands. These inward Sentiments and Principles must animate and inspire all the Petitions which we address to the Deity, in order to their being *a reasonable Service*. The Mind, or Heart, being the only Source of true Devotion, it is certain, that if our Understanding and good Affections do not accompany the external Performances of it; that these, how pompous or solemn soever they may appear to be, will at the best be but insignificant dead Forms, a mere Exercise of the Lips, which

is no more to be regarded, than the Noise SERM.
of the sounding Brass, or tinkling Cymbal. VI.

II. I shall now enquire into the Reasons, for which this Duty is to be attended to, and performed by us. And,

I. It must be obvious to every Man of Reflection, that there is naturally in Mankind a strong Propensity to Prayer, antecedently both to their Conception of it as a religious Duty, and to their Consideration of its Use and beneficial Tendency. We have such an intimate Sense and Feeling of our infirm, indigent, and dependent State: There are such clear and strong Appearances of our being always in the Hands of a superior Agent, who has the absolute Disposal of us, and all our Affairs, that by a mere Impulse of Nature, without Deliberation and Reflection, we often have Recourse to this higher Being, in the secret Breathings and Wishes of our Hearts, for his Protection and Favour. There are probably none, who have not frequently found this to be the Case with Themselves, especially when they have fallen into any sudden Distress, or Danger. Even Those who are most willing to banish God from all their Thoughts, who make the greatest Progress in real, or affected Atheism, are, upon many

SERMON VI. **my Occasions, compelled, in Spight of all their Prejudices and Endeavours to the Contrary, to look up to the Author of their Beings, and Fountain of all Good: When such Persons meet with any unexpected Stroke, when they are alarmed with imminent Danger, or seized with the Apprehension of approaching Death, how quickly do most of them, at least, forget their former Speculations and Principles, and fly to that Being for Relief and Succour, who, according to the common and natural Notions of Mankind, is the indulgent and gracious Parent of the human Kind, and their only Refuge and Support in Cases of Extremity? Now as no Determination of Nature has been given us in vain, this Propensity which we naturally have to Devotion, very plainly indicates, that we are designed and made for the Exercise of it; and that as it will not be in our Power, if we resolved it ever so much, wholly to omit it, so we cannot allow Ourselves in the Neglect of it, without a manifest Contradiction to our Constitution, and Deviating into a different Course from that, which our original Bent points out to us, and directs us to pursue.**

2. When we reflect upon the Act of SERM.
Prayer itself, to which we are by Nature VI.
so much disposed and prompted, we find
that it does not stand solely upon the Foun-
dation of a natural Propensity; but that it
approves itself to the calmest Judgment of
our Minds; and appears to be a Thing
highly worthy of us, and which we can-
not omit, or neglect, without an inexcu-
sable Failure in the Homage and Duty
which we owe to our Creator, and just
and good Protector and Governor. Who-
ever considers the derived dependent Con-
dition of his Nature; that he received his
Being at first most freely from the Hands of
God, and is indebted to him constantly for
the Preservation of it; that he owes to
him, both all his present Enjoyments, and
all his future Hopes; and that he is neces-
sarily subject to his Controul and Govern-
ment, and will be always treated by him,
according to the most exact Measures of
Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness:
Whoever, I say, considers this to be the
State which he is in, must surely think it
extremely becoming him, to entertain and
cultivate the most lively Sense of his De-
pendance upon his great Creator and Go-
vernor, to express his Reliance upon him
for

SERMON for the Supply of his Wants, and his De-
VI. fire of the Continuance of his Favour,
 without which, he could not even subsist
for one Moment, much less partake of that
great Happiness of which his Nature is ca-
pable, to declare his Confidence in the
perfect Wisdom, Justice, Clemency, and
Goodness of the Divine Administration,
and his Acquiescence in all the Events,
which, under the Direction and Govern-
ment of God, befall him. There can, cer-
tainly, be no Man, who reflects duly upon
the natural Condition of Men, and the
Relation in which they stand to the Deity,
and who has withal any Principles of In-
genuity and Gratitude in him, and any
Notion of what is decent and respectful to-
wards the most excellent Superior, and
greatest Benefactor, but must be convinced
that the Expression of these Sentiments,
and the Exercise of these Dispositions to-
wards God, is a Tribute of Acknowledg-
ment and Honour most indispensably due
to him from Mankind, and that none who
consult the Dignity of their own Conduct,
and pursue the Direction of the higher
Principles in their Minds, can ever fall
short in the Payment of it. Now as these
Sentiments and Affections are most effec-
tually

ually expressed and exerted, and at the same time, greatly heightened and strengthened by solemn Acts of Prayer, and as without Prayers of some Sort, they can hardly be expressed and exerted at all, it is very plain, that Prayer is a Duty which the Consciences of Men must always recommend to them, and strictly charge them to perform. And as Prayer is thus approved and recommended by the Judgment of our own Consciences, so it is likewise approved and required by God himself: For though he can never be supposed to stand in Need of the Acknowledgment and Homage of weak Mortals, nor even of the highest of his Creatures; yet, as that Sense of Things, and those Dispositions of Heart, which put us upon offering our Petitions to him, and which constitute the Life of all true Devotion, are necessary to our Dignity and Happiness, as reflecting moral Beings, it is evidently a Thing very worthy of the Deity, and what might be expected from the Holiness and Goodness of his Nature, that he should insist upon our humble and dutiful Addresses to himself, and limit his Promises of Communicating his Favours to us, to the Condition of our applying for Them. Accordingly, we find, that he has required
our

SERM. our Praying to him, not only by his original Law engraved in our Hearts, but by many positive Declarations of his Will in the Holy Scriptures, and that all the explicit Promises which he has made us of any Blessings, are suspended upon the Condition of our asking them. He may, certainly, if he pleases, prevent all the Desires of Men in bestowing his Favours, and be found even of *Those who seek him not*; but, according to the best Judgment that we can form of his Conduct, either from the Light of Nature, or the Notices of Scripture, one Law taking Place, at least generally, in his Government of rational and moral Agents, is, that *Those who are duly sensible of their Want of his Favour, and sincerely and submissively apply to him for it, shall receive it; while the Men, who affect to forget their Dependance upon him, and insolently refuse to make any Submissions and Applications to him, shall be neglected and disregarded by him: Or, in other Words, that God will resist the Proud, but give Grace to the Humble.* So that it is a very clear Case, that we cannot omit offering our Desires to God in Prayer, without both a most presumptuous, and a most imprudent Violation of our Duty.

James iv.
6.

3. Lastly,

Lastly, the great Advantage, or Use *SER. 13.*
of Prayer, may strongly recommend it to *VI.*

us. It would be tedious to enumerate particularly all the Advantages of Prayer: I shall only observe in general, that of all the Means which can be used, for advancing the Perfection, Dignity, and Happiness of human Nature, none will probably be more effectual, than the rational and serious Performance of this Duty. For what can be better adapted to open and enlarge, to improve and strengthen, and to refine and purify all our Faculties and Affections, than such attentive Meditations upon the Deity, and his most lovely Perfections, as are presupposed in all our rational Addresses to him; than our professing before him, who knows our Hearts, and is not to be deceived or mocked by us, our full Persuasion of his infinite Power, Knowledge, Righteousness, and Goodness, and our affectionate and entire Dependence on his Providence; than our expressing our perfect Satisfaction with the Wisdom and Equity of his Laws and Government, and our absolute Submission and Resignation to his Will and Pleasure; than our desiring him, as we shall do, if we pray with Understanding, to give us true Virtue and Goodness, and an Increase
of

SERMON of That, in all Piety, Justice, Charity, Meek-

VI. ness, and Temperance, above all other Pos-

sessions and Enjoyments; and to deliver us

from the Dominion of Sin and Vice, and

all the Remains of our Corruptions, rather

than from Poverty, Sickness, or any other

outward Calamity that can come upon us?

These Things, if duly practised, and fre-

quently repeated, in the solemn Acts of our

Devotion, besides their laying us open to

the Impressions of a Divine Light, and en-

titling us, according to the Promises of the

Gospel, to the Assistance of the Holy Spi-

rit, in the Prosecution of a virtuous Life,

have a plain natural Tendency to raise us

up to a noble Sublimity of Mind, and a

great Elevation and Purity of Heart; as

they make us familiarly and habitually

conversant with the most excellent Objects,

and in consequence of that, inspire us with

the most generous Notions and Designs; as

they render our Sense of moral Good and

Evil, acute and prompt, and add Force to

the Operation of all our most amiable Af-

fections; and as they bring us under the

Influence of such powerful Principles of

Religion, as will be effectual Preservatives

of our Integrity in all Times of Temptation,

and enable us to make such an eminent

Progress

Progress in Virtue, as must highly adorn SEAM.
our Characters, and gloriously distinguish VI.
our Conduct, from that of the Men who
never accustom themselves to the serious
Exercise of Devotion, who act from no
steady Regards to the Deity, but are almost
wholly led by the undirected Motions of
their natural Appetites and Passions. And
besides this Perfection and Dignity of Na-
ture, which we attain to by the Practice
of Devotion, a great deal of Pleasure, Se-
curity, and Peace, is also the Consequence
of it. The lively Exercise of our devout
Affections, is always accompanied with a
particular Joy, and sometimes with an over-
flowing and ravishing Delight, which settles,
as a Temper of Virtue, and of Confidence
towards God, grows out of the repeated
Exercises of these Affections, in an habitual
Serenity, and a solid and permanent Peace
of Mind; which puts us in the best Situ-
ation for enjoying any innocent Plea-
sures of the World, which renders us su-
perior to the unfortunate Accidents of Life,
and can make us even to rejoice in Death,
which we know will introduce us to that blef-
sed State, in which we shall be admitted into
a closer Union with the Fountain of Ex-
cellence and Happiness; where we shall

SERM. *see God as he is*, and love him most sin-

VI. *cerely and intensely, and partake of the Ful-*
ness of his Joy, and drink of the River of his
Pleasures for evermore. This, I know will

1 John iii.

2. Psalm xvi.

11.

— xxxvi.

8.

be accounted very absurd and ridiculous
 Talk, by many Persons of profane and cor-
 rupt Minds, who are so far from having a
 Notion of the great Worth and Pleasure of
 Devotion, that they look upon it to be an
 Employment fit only for Children and
 Fools, and a miserably dry and insipid En-
 tertainment. But so would many of the
 most sublime and beatifical Exercises of the
 Angels and Saints in Heaven be thought of
 by such Men too: The Truth is, it is im-
 possible to them to judge of the real Worth
 and Value of these Spiritual Employments,
 as their higher Powers and Faculties, by
 which alone they can approve and relish
 them, are quite enslaved and oppressed by
 the inferior Principles in their Constitution,
 which give them a Taste for nothing but
 Objects of an entirely different Strain and
 Tendency. But as the Light is extremely
 pleasant to all who have Eyes to behold it,
 notwithstanding that the Blind receive no
 Joy from it; so the Practice of true De-
 votion is exceedingly agreeable to all who
 have inward Faculties to perceive and taste

its Pleasures, though to Those who want such Faculties, it is a Thing of no Relish or Delight at all. Indeed the great Happiness of a Life of serious Devotion, is always abundantly clear and certain to religious and virtuous Men themselves from their constant Experience, and may, even abstracting from private Experience, be evident enough to all, who fairly judge of it, from its most obvious and apparent Effects. For do not a Spirit of Piety and Faith in God, always remarkably afford to Those in whom they prevail, the purest Satisfaction and Peace in all Conditions, and particularly yield them that Support and Consolation in Adversity, which nothing else can give?

III. The *Third* Thing which I am to do, is to consider what Qualifications are necessary on our Part, to render our Prayers acceptable and successful. And as These may be, in a great measure, known from what has been already said, and must indeed be always pretty obvious to Persons of any Reflection, there will be no Necessity for giving here any long Account or Description of Them.

I. We must pray with Attention, Seriousness, and Fervency. Attention to our Actions is necessary to make them merely rational or human Acts, and it is still more necessary to make any of them Acts of Religion. If we uttered ever such specious and plausible Words in our Addresses to God, while our Thoughts do not ascend to him, we only offer him the Sacrifice of Fools, and are so far from honouring and pleasing him, that we affront and offend him, as we presume to trifle in his Presence, and treat him with a Neglect and Contempt, which would be quite unsufferable in any Person, with respect to his Superior in this World. But it is not enough to pray barely with Attention; we must address Ourselves to our Maker, with great Seriousness and Fervour of Spirit: Not that the Earnestness or Vehemence of our Desires is wanted to move the Compassion or Goodness of the Deity; but as the great Ends of Prayer, such as impressing our own Minds with a deep Sense of our necessary Dependance upon our Creator, the fixing and raising our Confidence in him, and the strengthening and increasing all other good Dispositions in our Hearts, and rendering Ourselves in Consequence of all this, the proper

proper Objects of the Divine Grace and S E R M. 2

Favour; as these Ends of Prayer, I say, are VI.

obtained, not by cold, languid, and unani-

minated Petitions, which can make no strong

Impressions, nor produce any lasting Ef-

fects, but only by solemn, enlivened, and

intent Applications to the Throne of Hea-

ven, in which all our Powers are called

forth to view and contemplate the Excel-

lence and Goodness of the Divine Majesty,

and full Scope is given to all those Affec-

tions and Desires, which naturally arise in

us from such a View and Contemplation,

it is necessary for the same Reasons for

which we pray at all, that we pray with

great Composure and Recollection, and

with great Earnestness and Ardour of Mind.

A Caution, however, is here proper to be

given, which is, that we must take Care,

lest under the Notion of praying with a

necessary Earnestness and Warmth, we run

into those artificial Commotions, and me-

chanical Heats, which many Persons throw

themselves into, in the Exercise of their De-

votion. These Things, which have a Foun-

dation only in the Constitution of the Body,

and a Disorder of the Imagination, and

which often produce very unnatural and

shocking Appearances in Men, we should

SERMON. carefully guard against, as being utterly inconsistent with the Design of all true Devotion; and allow in ourselves only that Fervency in Prayer, which is the genuine Result of the clear and just Views that we have of the most important and interesting Objects, which, in its greatest Height, is under the Command of our rational Faculties, which never overpowers or impedes them, but always leaves room for their calmest and freest Exercise.

2. We must pray with Constancy and Perseverance. This is required from us, in several Places of the *New Testament*, where we are bid to *pray always, and without ceasing, to continue in Prayer, and to watch in the same*; which we are not to understand so as if we were to shut ourselves up from the World, and spend our whole Time in spiritual Meditations, and Acts of Devotion: This is a Thing not possible in itself; and if it were possible, would be plainly repugnant to the Design of Religion, and inconsistent with other Duties, to which we are, at least, as strictly obliged as to this of Prayer. But the Meaning of these Directions is, that we should be habitually prepared for the Exercise of Devotion, by having those Principles always strong and lively

Luke
xviii. 1.
1 Theff.
v. 17.
Col. iv. 2.

lively in our Minds, which are necessary, SERM.
previously to our engaging in it, and which VI.
dispose and prompt us to the Practice of
it, that we should be often *lifting up our*
Hearts to God, in some secret Prayers, or
devout Ejaculations, according to the Op-
portunities which the various Occurrences
of Life afford us for doing so; and that
we should never for any long time wholly
omit or neglect Devotion, but should al-
ways rather abound, than fall short in the
just and becoming Expressions of it, and
that we should have some stated Times,
which we should observe as punctually as
other necessary Duties will allow us to do,
for making our more deliberate and solemn
Addresses and Supplications to our Creator.
The Reason of which Diligence and Con-
stancy in Prayer, is not that the Repetition
of our Requests, can ever be necessary to
prevail upon God to grant us what we ask;
but because the good Dispositions which
Prayer is intended to form and raise in us,
and which alone can make us capable of
the Favour of God, are to be produced,
improved, and perfected in us, not by our
praying only rarely, or accidentally; but
by an assiduous, patient, and regular At-
tendance upon this Duty, as well as by

688 M. Zeal and Fervency in the Performance of

VI. it.



Jam. i.
5, 6.

2. Another Qualification with which we are to offer our Prayers to God, is Faith. *If any of you lack Wisdom, says St. James, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him; but let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering.* By this is not to be understood a vain Assurance, or Presumption, of obtaining whatever we may ignorantly, or rashly desire from God, whether it be agreeable to his Nature to give it to us, or good for ourselves to have it, or not; which is the Notion of some Enthusiasts: But by it is meant our entertaining worthy and just Apprehensions of the Deity, and a Persuasion of his being both able and willing to grant us all those Instances of his Favour, which he knows to be necessary or convenient for us, when we sincerely apply to him for them, and endeavour to please him by the Performance of our whole Duty. This Confidence in God, which may very well arise from the Discovery which he has made of the several Perfections of his Nature in the Constitution and Government of the World, is plainly requisite in all, who mean to honour the Deity by their Prayers, and to address themselves to him with Understanding,

derstanding, and with such Zeal and Dil-
gence as are necessary to procure them Ac-
ceptance and Success in their Devotions.
And besides this Faith in God, which the
general Dictates of Nature and Reason re-
commend to all who pray to him, it is ne-
cessary for us, who are convinced of the
Truth of Christianity, to pray particularly
with the Faith of Christians, as the Disci-
ples of Jesus Christ, and in his Name, act-
ing in pursuance of his Commands, and by
his Warrant or Authority, having an entire
Dependence upon his Promises, and a full
Assurance of obtaining whatever Blessings
we ask from the Father, according to his
Instructions and Directions. This Faith in
the Promises of our Saviour, we should al-
ways take along with us in the Exercise of
our Devotions, both because it is an Instance
of that Respect and Honour which we owe
to our blessed Lord, and because it is a thing
which must give great Life and Energy to
our Prayers, and enable us to carry on the
Design of them with the surest Success and
Effect.

4. We must pray with Minds purified
from all Affection to Sin, and resolved upon
all Virtue; and particularly free from all
Malice and Ill-will, and disposed to univer-

SERMON. *Sal Charity and Forgiveness towards Man-*

VIV kind. To presume to appear before God

in Prayer, while we have any Intention of practising Vice, or while we harbour any actual Inclination towards it in our Hearts, as it is the most outrageous Insult that we can possibly offer to the Majesty of God, being in Effect to declare that we take him to be an impure and unholy Being, who can have Fellowship with Iniquity, and be its Friend and Patron; so it must render our Prayers, not only unsuccessful, but altogether abominable and detestable. We must be free from all Wickedness at least in our Intentions and Desires, and determined to universal Righteousness and Obedience to the Laws of God, before we are in any Degree qualified to pray acceptably, or can reasonably hope for the least good Effect of our Devotions. And as the black and odious Vices of Rancour, Malice, and Revenge, are peculiarly contrary to the Nature of God, and inconsistent with the Designs of his Mercy and Goodness towards his Creatures, we must particularly put away from us all these, and express a Temper of universal Benevolence, Meekness, and Forgiveness to our Brethren, in order to the obtaining that Mercy and Forgiveness

Eph. iv.
31.

to

to ourselves, which we want and desire SERM. VI.
 from the common Father and Governor of Mankind. That our praying in this good

Temper of Charity, is a necessary Condition of our praying successfully, is plain from many Passages in the *New Testament*, and particularly from the Prayer which our Lord prescribed to his Disciples. And the Equity of this Condition is very convincingly and affectionately taught us by our Saviour, in the Expostulation of the Lord, with the unrelenting and unforgiving Servant, in the Parable: *O thou wicked Servant, I forgave all that Debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest thou not also have had Compassion on thy Fellow-servant, even as I had Pity on thee?* And the same Thing is very well declared to us by the wise Son of Syrach, *One Man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek Pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no Mercy to a Man who is like himself, and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins?*

Mat. xviii.
32, 33.

Ecclus.
xxviii.
3, 4.

5. Lastly, To render our Prayers successful, we must follow them with our own Endeavours to obtain the good Things for which we pray. For the Design of Prayer, being not to supersede the use of our natural Faculties, but to enliven and strengthen them,

SERVE them, and to procure us a divine Assistance
 VI. in exerting them, if we stop at sending up
 our Petitions to Heaven, and do not go on,
 in that Strength which is communicated to
 us, and in a Dependence upon those farther
 Aids which may be expected from the Be-
 nignity of our heavenly Father, to exert
 our Powers, and to do the best that we
 can for ourselves, we evidently counteract
 the Design of this Duty, and must, cer-
 tainly, fall short of the Benefits, which
 might otherwise be expected from the Per-
 formance of it. Indeed as we are rational
 and moral Agents, we can never attain to
 our true Happiness, by any Means, which
 prevent the full Exercise of our intellectual
 and moral Powers, and exclude our Acti-
 vity and Care: The Constitution of our Be-
 ings, and the Order of our Nature, will
 not permit that we should. And therefore
 to expect that God should grant That to
 our bare Requests, which, according to the
 Design of his Creation, and the established
 Laws of his Government, is to be the Ef-
 fect, not only of our Requests to him, but
 likewise of our subsequent Pains and Dili-
 gence, would be fatally to impose upon
 ourselves. God must, in all Reason, be
 thought to do enough for us, when besides
 his

his upholding us in the Existence which ~~he~~ ^{he} has given us, he always grants us, upon VI
our serious, fervent, and faithful Applications to him, such a Measure of his Favour and Assistance, as in a due Exercise and Improvement of our own Abilities, will be abundantly sufficient, both for our present Welfare, and our future Happiness. And if we are disappointed in attaining to these, we must impute it only to a wretched Negligence and Sloth, or to some worse Principles and Dispositions in Ourselves.

I shall put an End to this Discourse, with a few short Reflections and Observations upon what has been delivered.

From what has been said, we may see the Weakness and Fallacy of those Arguments, which have been sometimes used, (even by Persons, who have pretended to acknowledge an original supreme Maker and Governor of the World) to prove the Absurdity and Impertinence of Prayer, taken from the Omniscience of God, which sets him above all want of our Informations; from the Certainty of his Counsels and Measures, which are never to be altered by any Applications and Intreaties of ours; and from his perfect Wisdom, Goodness, and Righteousness, which both enable and determine

SERM. determine him to do always what is best

VI. and fittest for all his Creatures, without be-

ing solicited and importuned to it, by poor Mortals upon this Earth. The Fallacy, I say, of these Arguments may be easily discovered from what has been discoursed, which makes it plain, that they proceed upon a quite mistaken Notion of the Design of Prayer, which is, not to acquaint the Deity with any thing that he was before ignorant of, nor to move him to depart from the settled Measures of his Government over rational Agents, nor to excite any Disposition, which was not always strong and fixed in him, to pity and do good to his Creatures; but to prepare and qualify ourselves for his Approbation and Beneficence; to raise, improve, and confirm, by our solemn Addresses to him, all those good Dispositions and Affections of Heart, which, from the essential Perfections of his Nature, and the unalterable Laws of his most wise and righteous Government, are the only sure Foundation, upon which we can hope for his Acceptance and Favour. Now if this true End of Prayer be kept in View, it must be very evident, that the perfect Knowledge of God, and the immutable Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice

of

of his Administration, are so far from being SERM.
 Arguments against this Duty, that they af- VI.
 ford the strongest Reasons for exciting us
 to Zeal, Diligence, and Constancy in the
 Practice of.

2. We may here see how much those
 Persons mistake and abuse the Duty of
 Prayer, who content themselves merely
 with the external Performance of it, and
 substitute this as the Ground of their Ex-
 pectation of the Favour of God, though
 they are altogether careless about all other
 Branches of their Duty. For as the great
 Purposes of Prayer, are, not so much to
 pay an outward Homage to the Deity, or
 to present our Complements and Applauses
 to him, as to exercise and express all the
 good Affections towards him, which na-
 turally arise in us, from a Sense of our
 Dependance on him, and the Contempla-
 tion of his most amiable Perfections, and
 to improve and strengthen these Affections,
 in order to their governing more effectually
 our whole Conduct in the World; it is plain
 that the great Multitudes of Persons, who
 are so apt to take up with a *Form of God-
 linefs* and Devotion, while there is nothing
 either in their Hearts, or in the Conduct
 of their Lives, answerable to such an Ap-
 pearance,

SERM. pearance, most grossly mistake, and con-

VI. tradict the Ends of Prayer, and instead of offering a rational and acceptable Worship to their Maker, only run into a most absurd and useless, and even a most dangerous and hurtful Superstition.

3. From a due Attention to what has been discoursed, we may learn, how the outward Circumstances of Prayer, such as the Forms and Modes, the Postures, Times, and Places of performing it, are to be ordered and regulated. These Things, which are all variable in their Nature, and may be diversified according to the different Apprehensions and Tempers of Men, are to be determined by Every One, in the Exercise of his private Devotion, in such a Manner, as from the Knowledge and Experience which he has of Himself, he judges will enable him most effectually to carry on the great Designs of his Prayers. In Publick, indeed, for avoiding Disorder and Indecency, the appointed Forms and Methods of Prayer must be used, while there is nothing in them inconsistent with our Attainment to the true Ends of this Duty. But in the Practice of private Devotion, every Person is at Liberty to chuse such Forms, Gestures, and Seasons for

Prayer,

Prayer, as are suited to his Temper, and contribute most to compose and elevate his Thoughts, and to confirm and improve all pious and good Affections in Him; and whoever would discharge this Part of his Duty with a due Care, will always fix on those external Circumstances of his Devotion, which he finds to have the best Effect upon his Mind.

VI.

4. Lastly, We may observe, that what has been here delivered upon the Subject of Prayer in general, may be applied, not only to the Prayers of particular Persons, but, in a great Degree, to the Prayers of Men united in smaller, or larger Societies; in private Families, or the publick Assemblies of the Church: Particularly, the same Reasons, or the strongest of Them, which have been offered for the Prayers of Individuals, are equally conclusive for the social and publick Prayers of Men; as These, no less than the Other, are just Expressions of that Respect and Honour, which are due to the Supreme Being, and have the plainest Tendency to promote the Dignity and Happiness of our Nature. Indeed a social and publick Worship of God, is recommended by some distinct Considerations: But it is enough to observe here, that who-

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ever,

SERM. ever, upon the Principles laid down in this

VI. Discourse, admit the Necessity and Use of

Prayer in the Case of particular Persons, can hardly fail to acknowledge the Propriety and Advantage of social and publick Devotion, and to look upon the Contempt, or Neglect of it, as a Thing very inexcusable.

S E R.

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SERMON VII.

The Nature, various Kinds, Causes,
and evil Consequences of Super-
stition; with Reasons for guard-
ing against it, and the Methods
of preventing, or remedying it.

ACTS xvii, 22.

*Then Paul stood in the Midst of Mars-Hill,
and said, ye Men of Athens, I perceive
that in all Things ye are too Superstitious.*

THE Charge which St. Paul here SERM.
advances against the *Athenians*, VII.
might, perhaps, always have been,
and may still, with too much Truth, be
brought against the greatest Part of Man-
kind. A Proneness to Superstition, is
plainly one of those Weaknesses which are
most incident to human Nature, from which
even great Degrees of Understanding and
Wisdom are not always sufficient wholly to

SERM. exempt us.

VII.

tion was to have been found universally taking Place in any Part of the World, it might very reasonably have been expected in *Athens*, which in *St. Paul's* Time, and long before it, was the principal Seat of Philosophy and Learning, and of all polite and liberal Education; but notwithstanding this Advantage, we find that the People of this celebrated City, according to the Apostle's Account of them, which is the same with that which has been given of them by other ancient Writers, were fallen into a most absurd and gross Superstition, having for the most part no clear and distinct Notions of the true God of the Universe, being always ready to increase and multiply their Deities, and to receive even unknown Beings into the Number of them, and to make use of any vain or immoral Rites for pleasing and honouring these Deities, which their weak Apprehensions and idle Fears suggested to them. As therefore a Propensity to Superstition is an Infirmary so common to Mankind, and as it is withal a Thing of very dangerous Tendency, it may be of great Use to put Men upon their Guard against the Prevalence of it in their Minds; or, if they are already

in

in any Measure infected with it, to deliver them from it by proper Instructions and Directions. S. B. M. VII

That I may contribute a little to this End, I shall in the following Discourse take these several Things into Consideration.

- I. The Nature, various Kinds, and usual Causes of Superstition.
- II. The evil Tendency and unhappy Consequences of it.
- III. The Reasons which should make us guard against it, and oppose it.
- IV. The Methods of preventing or remedying it. After which I shall make a few general Reflections upon this Subject.

I. I shall consider the Nature, various Kinds, and usual Causes of Superstition. Superstition is a Word which has not one precise and determinate Signification, and it would be hard to give any Definition of this Term, which would comprehend the several Things to which it is applied *. It

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denotes

* Superstition, according to the Propriety of the Original Word, signifies the Worship of *Dæmons*, or the Souls of dead Men: And indeed Idolatry, in this, and every other Form of it, is Superstition. But there is a more general Notion of Superstition, both in ancient and modern Writers, which includes the several Species of false Devotion, or

SERM. denotes different Dispositions and Affections
VII. of Mind, the Nature of which will be best
understood, by considering the several
Kinds of Superstition which have prevailed
among Mankind. The Foundation of all
Superstition seems indeed to be laid in false
or unworthy Notions of that Power which
governs the Universe, and upon the Exer-
cise of which the Happiness or Misery of
Men depends. But as these false Notions
have been different in the Minds of Men,
they have given Rise to different Kinds and
Instances of Superstition. Thus, an Ap-
prehension that the Being, or Beings, sup-
posed to be concerned in the Government
of the World, were severe and cruel, ar-
bitrary and tyrannical in their Admini-
stration, delighting in the Torments and
Misery of Mankind, has often begot a most
flavish Fear and Dread of them, which has
urged the Persons possessed with this Fear
to the most impious and inhuman Practices
for appeasing the Wrath of these Beings,
and entitling Themselves to their Protection
and

or the various Affections which arise in Men towards real or
imaginary Beings; falsely supposed to be Divine, according
to the Conceptions which they have of their Nature and
Qualities; or towards the true God, from a mistaken, or
unworthy Conception of some Part of his Character. And
in this largest and most extensive Sense, Superstition is treated
of in this Discourse.

and Favour. And this is a Sense of Superstition which frequently occurs in ancient Writers, as indeed there were many dismal Instances of the Thing, as there still are, in several Parts of the *Heathen* World.

Again; A Conception of the Governor of the World, as not acting from a steady and uniform Regard to moral Piety and Virtue, but as being influenced in the Expressions of his Favour or Displeasure towards Mankind, by a Passion like Vanity and Conceit in Men, by an Affectation of Praise and Glory, a Love of Pomp and Pageantry, and a Fondness to intricate Speculations and incomprehensible Notions, has produced another Sort of Superstition, consisting in a Disposition to flatter the Deity, and to put him off with Complements and Applauses, Fawnings and Cringings, Temples, Altars, Images, Processions, and all Sorts of ceremonious Services; with a Zeal and Punctuality about the external Forms, Rites, and Modes of Devotion; with Heat and Violence in maintaining and propagating true Opinions, and a Forwardness to believe all Things recommended by the Name of high and awful Mysteries, however absurd, and contradictory to the plainest Dictates of common Sense and Understanding.

SERMON. derstanding. This is a Kind of Supersti-
 VII. tion which has always abounded greatly in
 the World; There was a vast deal of it
 among the *Heathens*, as well as of the more
 unnatural and inhuman Kind of Super-
 stition. The *Jews* were very remarkable
 for it, especially in their later and more de-
 generate Times, when they almost univer-
 sally substituted it in the Room of all true
 Piety and Goodness. Nor have *Christians*,
 notwithstanding the rational and clear No-
 tions which their Religion has delivered of
 the Nature of God, and the great Sim-
 plicity of the Worship which it has pre-
 scribed towards him, been by any Means
 free from it. Perhaps there have been but
 Few of any Denominations of them, who
 have not had some Tincture of this Super-
 stition, which has, at least, inclined them
 to lay an undue Stress upon little Things,
 and to contend for them with too great
 Zeal and Vehemence; and it is certain,
 that some whole Sects and Churches of
 professed *Christians* have been chargeable
 with it in the grossest Manner, having
 considerably improved upon the Follies of
 their Predecessors in this Sort of Supersti-
 tion, and introduced such extravagant Fop-
 peries into their Forms of religious Wor-
 ship,

ship, and such flagrant Absurdities into the SERMON Systems of their Belief, and discovered such VII a frantick Zeal in propagating them, as exceed Every Thing of the Kind, that was to be found among the ancient *Jews* and *Heathens*.

Besides these, there is another Kind of Superstition, which, if it has any Meaning at all in it, must likewise arise from unworthy Notions of the Government of the World, as if it was administered, not by any fixed Measures of Wisdom and Goodness, but by Caprice, Fancy, and unaccountable Humour; making the Prosperity or Adversity of Men to depend upon the merest Trifles, and the most fortuitous Events and Occurrences. This sort of Superstition consists in Regarding Omens and Presages, in taking Hints of good or bad Fortune, from Things happening on lucky or unlucky Days, from Dreams, Predictions of Astrologers and Fortune-tellers, accidental and transient Sensations, or natural Impressions upon the Bodies of Men, and innumerable other Things which can never be a reasonable Foundation for our Hopes or Fears at all; and in using Charms, or any foolish and impertinent Forms and Ceremonies, for procuring Good, and averting
ing

SERM. ing Evil. This is a Superstition, which
VIII has likewise been very common among
 Mankind, and appears still in a great many
 Instances, which must be very well known
 to every Man of Observation and Experi-
 ence; and it is of a distinct Species from
 the other Sorts of Superstition, as it im-
 plies a different Disposition of Mind, and
 influences Men chiefly in their Conduct of
 the common Affairs of Life, and is not
 practised by them, at least for the most
 part, under the Appearance of Devotion
 and Zeal in Religion, as the other Kinds
 of Superstition are.

As for the Causes of these several Kinds
 of Superstition; there is one fundamental
 and general Cause of them all, without
 which, other more particular and imme-
 diate Causes could have no great Force for
 producing them: This is a *Neglect of a
 free and vigorous Use of Reason.* God has
 certainly made a sufficient Discovery of
 Himself to the Reason of Mankind, and
 none who attend to, and seriously reflect
 upon, the clear Evidences of infinite Wis-
 dom, Power, Righteousness, and Goodness,
 which abound in the Universe, particularly
 in the Constitution of human Nature, can
 be ignorant of his Nature and Perfections;
 and

and from a Consideration of the Perfections SEEM?
of God, and of those Powers, which he VIII
has given to Men, we may easily infer what
that Worship is, which alone can be agree-
able to Him from Us. But it is plain, that
Mankind are stupidly inattentive to this
most important of all Truths, *the Existence*
of the Being who is First and Supreme in the
Universe, the perfectly wise, powerful, and
just Creator and Governor of all Things,
and to the Consequences which most obvi-
ously flow from it; that though the Evi-
dences of this great Principle of Religion
are indeed so strong as to force themselves,
in some Degree, into almost every Under-
standing, yet the greatest part of Men do
not examine them with that Diligence and
Impartiality which are necessary to their
forming a just and consistent Scheme with
regard to the Deity, and the Respect and
Homage which are due to him from Man-
kind, but are apt to *become vain in their*
Imaginations concerning these Things, to
bring human Frailties and Passions into the
Character of the Deity; or to divide the
Godhead, and parcel out the Divine Perfec-
tions among a Multitude of Beings, and to
hold the most monstrous Opinions of these
imaginary Divinities, which, being never
brought

SERM. brought to the Test of Reason, nor corrected
 VII by its Decisions, prove the Foundation of
 the grossest Idolatry, and the most absurd
 and impious Superstition.

But besides this general and more remote Cause of Superstition, there are several direct and immediate Sources of it.

The first is Customary Tradition: False Notions of the Divinity, or of Divine Beings or Powers, being once introduced, are easily propagated and handed down, with all the idolatrous and superstitious Consequences of them, from one Generation to another; Men usually being of very resigned Understandings in Matters of Religion, having an implicit Reliance on the Wisdom of former Times, and acquiescing without Doubt or Scruple in the several Articles of Belief, and the several Forms and Modes of Devotion, which have been happily received and held by their Forefathers for many Ages.

Another Source of Superstition, may be found in the natural Tempers of Men. The prevalent Affections and Passions of our Minds, have usually a great, and often an insensible, Influence on our Apprehensions and Judgments, and are apt to give a Tincture to our Notions and Opinions on
 all

all Subjects; and particularly on those most important and interesting Subjects, the Character of the Governor of the World, and that Worship of Him which is necessary to recommend us to his Favour. Thus, a dark and gloomy, a timorous and suspicious Temper, naturally presents to Those in whom it prevails, a frightful Image of the Deity, as a Being of irresistible Power, and at the same Time full of Wrath and Jealousy, partial, stern, and inexorable; and in consequence of this, raises in them the most detestable of all superstitious Affections, a servile Dread of this horrible Spectre, prompting them, in order to appease his Fury, to exercise the most unnatural Severities and Barbarities both upon themselves and others. Again: A Mind possessed with an Admiration of Grandeur and Pomp, with a Love of Ceremony and Complement, Respect and Distinction, is apt to form a Deity of its own Complexion; to paint to itself an Idol actuated by Pride, Ambition, and Ostentation of Power, delighting highly in the Applauses, ceremonious Attendances, and abject Submissions of poor Mortals, and so runs into that Superstition, which consists in idle Adulations of the supreme Being, in the Observance of external Forms,

and

SERM. and all that Pageantry of Devotion, which,
VII. however unworthy of a perfect Mind, always gives great Amusement and Pleasure to the Imaginations of weak and vain Men. In like manner, a natural Warmth and Ardor of Temper, which is so apt to shew itself in almost every Part of a Man's Conduct, frequently mixes with his Religious Dispositions, and produces in him a superstitious Zeal for trifling or absurd Speculations, and the variable Forms and Circumstances of Divine Worship, making him to contend for Matters of small, or no Importance, as if they were of the greatest Importance; or to prefer them to Things which are really of the utmost Consequence in Religion.

But, Thirdly, The most universal Source and greatest Support of Superstition, is the Corruption of Men's Hearts. There are, perhaps, but very Few, who can utterly extinguish all Sense of the Deity, and the Duty which they owe to him in their Minds, and entirely get over all Hopes and Fears about a future State: The greatest Part even of bad Men always retain some Notion of the main Principles of Religion, and are frequently disposed to do something for quieting their Consciences, and

entitling

entitling themselves to the Favour of God SERMON.
in another World. But Many of them, VII.
being most miserably intangled in a Course
of Vice, and fond above all Things of for-
bidden Enjoyments, cannot prevail with
themselves to secure the Peace of their
Minds and the Favour of God, by the
best, and indeed the only effectual Method
of doing it, a sincere and universal Reforma-
tion. What then remains for Them, is
to compound Matters as well as they can
with the Deity; to offer him as Equivalents
for Repentance and Amendment of Life,
costly Oblations, stately Edifices, humble
Prostrations, rigorous Penances, a mighty
Zeal for Opinions and Points of Faith, and
unwearied Diligence in Matters of outward
Form and Ceremony. By these, and such
like Things, which, to their foolish Ima-
ginations, have the Appearance of great
Respect and Devotion towards the supreme
Being, they delude their Consciences, and
hope as effectually to please God, and
secure his Acceptance, as they could do,
*by living soberly, righteously, and godly in
the World.* A superstitious Religion, there-
fore, which abounds with Expedients for
obtaining the Favour of God, and the Hap-
piness of a future State, without the Prac-
tice

~~SERMON~~ ~~of true Piety and Virtue, is the natural~~
VII. ~~Refuge of wicked Men, who are possessed~~
~~of no great Measure of Reflection, and are~~
~~willing to be deceived: This is what Per-~~
~~sons of this Character must be extremely~~
~~fond of, and what they will immoveably~~
~~adhere to; because the Moment they quit-~~
~~ted it, they would find all their Hopes sub-~~
~~verted, and nothing in their Minds but the~~
~~most dismal Perplexity and Horror.~~

To these Causes of Superstition which have been mentioned, we must add, in the last Place, the Policy and Craft of many of the Leaders of Mankind, as another Source and Support of it. The Proneness of Mankind to Superstition, and the Handle which this affords for subjecting them to the Views of Men of Address and Cunning, are Things too obvious not to be taken Notice of, by Persons aiming at a State of Wealth and Grandeur, of great Power and Dominion. It has therefore been always the Business of the Politicians of this World, nicely to observe, and artfully to sooth all popular Superstitions; instead of endeavouring to correct and cure the Weaknesses of the human Mind which render Men so liable to Delusions, to strengthen and improve them; to give new Matter, from Time to Time, to
 3 the

the superstitious Affections of the Multitude SERM. VII
to work upon, and to keep their blind Zeal
in constant Exercise and Employment, in
order to divert their Attention from their
own wicked Designs, and by the sacred
Ties of Religion to bind Them more firmly
in their Chains, and render Them more
entirely subservient to the Purposes of their
Avarice, Pride, and Tyranny.

II. I proceed now to represent the unhappy Tendency, and evil Consequences of Superstition.

And for treating this Part of the Subject more distinctly, we must observe, that as there are various Kinds and Degrees of Superstition, they have not all the same malignant Tendency and Influence. Every Instance and Degree of Superstition is indeed dangerous, as it has some Tendency to corrupt the Mind, or, at least, to introduce a greater Degree of Blindness and Folly into it; and as it always imposes some unnecessary Burthen or Uneasiness upon the Persons possessed with it. But some Sorts and Instances of Superstition are very innocent and harmless, in Comparison of the grosser and more flagrant Kinds and Degrees of it. It is plain that there

SECT. VII. ~~are~~ **are** several Instances of Superstition, proceeding from some Mixture of Error, or some Confusion in Men's Notions of the supreme Being, or, perhaps, merely from their Inattention to his known Attributes, and the plain Declarations of his Will, consistent with the sincerest Exercise of Piety and Virtue, being often found in some of the best of Christians; and that the worst Consequences of them are the Disturbance and Terror which they raise in honest Minds for imaginary Defects, and the great Trouble and Pains which they put them to, about some Points and Circumstances, no way necessary to the acceptable Performance of their Duty. But when the superstitious Affections of Men arise from the most unworthy Conceptions of the Divine Nature, and become very strong and powerful in them, nothing is more ruinous to a good State of Mind, and attended with more pernicious and fatal Consequences.

The first and most immediate Effect of such superstitious Dispositions, is the Destruction of the Principles of a rational Piety, with their salutary and happy Influences. It is certain that well-regulated Affections towards the Deity, founded upon just Sentiments of his Nature, are not
only

only most amiable and becoming Qualities of the Mind, but of very great Importance to the good Conduct and Happiness of Life, having a mighty Efficacy for engaging Men to every Part of their Duty, and proving constant Sources of Consolation and Joy to them, in every Circumstance and Condition in which they can be placed in the World. But these Affections, of whatever Importance and Use they may be to Mankind, are extremely weakened, or rather almost totally destroyed, by blind and violent Superstitions, which usurp the Place of them, and cut off their beneficial Influence; shutting out of the Mind all rational Apprehensions, and consequently well ordered Dispositions with respect to the supreme Being, with all that Security and Confidence, and that Pleasure and Peace which good Men always find in the Exercise of a reasonable Piety, or in the Practice of true Religion.

But the Evil of these Superstitions does not rest here: For besides the Destruction which they bring on the religious Affections of Men, they universally corrupt their Consciences, and undermine the Foundations of moral Honesty and social Virtue which are naturally laid in their Minds;

and under the Warrant of a supposed Di-
 vine Authority, hurry them to the Com-
 mission of Crimes, not only inconsistent
 with Religion, but shocking to Humanity
 itself. The direful Influence of the grosser
 and more violent Superstitions in extinguish-
 ing the natural Light of Men's Minds, and
 defacing their Notions of moral Good and
 Evil, in suppressing and perverting their
 social Instincts and Affections, and re-
 conciling them to, and even making them
 to delight in Actions, which their Nature,
 exerting itself according to its original Con-
 stitution, would greatly abhor, must be
 well known to all who are acquainted with
 human Nature, and have been conversant
 in the History of the World. It is plain,
 that from hence arose the Use of human
 Sacrifices, directly offered up in Honour of
 the *Gods of the Gentiles*, and often attended
 with Circumstances of the most horrid and
 unnatural Barbarity, a Practice, which,
 without the Authority of a sacred Writer,
 we might have assuredly pronounced an
 Abomination to the Lord, and which no
 Man, whose Mind was not most dreadfully
 blinded and corrupted, could ever have
 gone into, or have thought of, without
 the utmost Aversion. From the same
 Source

Deut. xii.
 31.

Source has proceeded that wild Fury in
Men, of lacerating and mangling their Bo-
dies, and exposing them to various Pen-
nances and Sufferings, for pacifying their
fictitious Deities, which has been so com-
mon both in ancient and modern Times;
a thing directly contrary to some of the
strongest Instincts of Nature, and which
necessarily debases the Mind, damping all
generous Sentiments and Dispositions in it,
calling off its Attention from the Cultiva-
tion of truly virtuous Principles, and filling
it only with low and groveling Notions,
and a Zeal for Matters which throw Dis-
grace upon the rational Nature. From
this Fountain has likewise flowed the ac-
curst Spirit of Persecution, which has
done an infinite Prejudice to the Tempers
of Mankind, and produced the greatest
Destruction and Misery in human Society;
which has prompted Men to promote, what
they have called the Honour of God and
the Cause of true Religion, but in Truth,
the Interest of wicked Men and a System
of gross and pernicious Errors, by all the
Methods of Cruelty, Treachery, and False-
hood; by Fire, and Sword, and Devas-
tation of Countries; by Imprisonments,
Racks, and Tortures; by open Seditions;

Secret and Rebellions; by dark Conspiracies, and
VII Midnight-Massacres; by Breach of the
 most solemn Covenants and Oaths; by
 the most notorious Lies and Forgeries; in
 short, by trampling under foot every reli-
 gious and moral Obligation; by breaking
 all the Ties of Conscience and Humanity,
 by ceasing to act in the Spirit of Men, and
 turning Tygers and Serpents, the most
 fierce, venomous, and deceitful Beasts of
 Prey towards one another: Things so re-
 pugnant to the whole Constitution of our
 Nature, that it is not possible to conceive
 how any human Mind could consent to
 them, much less take Pleasure in them,
 which was not first imposed on by some
 false Appearances of Devotion, and insti-
 gated to them from an Opinion of their
 being the most acceptable Service which
 Men could do to that Being, in whose
 Power it is to make them inconceivably
 happy or miserable for ever. From the
 same Original is also derived that Narrow-
 ness of Mind, and that intemperate and
 warm Zeal in Men, which, when they do
 not urge them to go the Length of Extir-
 pation, kindle in them great Animosity
 and Wrath against all who differ from
 them, in, perhaps, some very disputable
 Opinions,

Opinions, or in some Points and Circum-
stances no way essential to Religion, mak-
ing them censorious and uncharitable, to
revile and hate their Brethren, to account
them odious to God and Enemies to his
Cause, and in Consequence of this, not
only to exclude them from their religious
Communion, but to be shy of their Com-
pany, and abstain as much as they can
from all Communication and Commerce
with them in Civil Matters; in direct Op-
position, not only to the Genius of Christi-
anity, but to all that Tenderness, Gentle-
ness, Forbearance, and Benevolence, for
the Practice of which, human Nature is so
plainly formed. From the Influence of the
grosser Superstitions proceeds likewise, in
the last Place, an Incurable Obstinacy of Tem-
per, or such an Obstinacy in Error and
Vice, as is at least extremely hard to be
overcome, or removed. Superstition, that
pestilent Distemper of the Mind, resembles
some malignant Distempers of the Body,
which propagate and encrease the ill Hu-
mours from whence they sprung: Whate-
ver Stupidity and Ignorance, whatever Mis-
takes, Prejudices, and corrupt Passions,
gave Rise to the superstitious Affections of
Men, or were in them when they took
place;

SERMON. place; all these are exceedingly raised, and strengthened by the Prevalence of those Affections; the Persons under the Power of them, being effectually restrained by them from examining their Notions and Opinions, and questioning any Part of their Conduct; holding the grossest Absurdities for the most certain Divine Truths, and thinking themselves obliged to adhere to them upon pain of Damnation; and imagining, while they are contradicting the End of all Religion, and practising the most detestable Villanies and Inhumanities, that they are arriving at the Heroism and Perfection of Virtue, and meriting the most eminent Degrees of the Glory and Happiness of Heaven. And thus it is that Superstition compleats the Ruin which it brings upon the Minds of Men, and secures its Triumphs over them, by confirming and hardening them in all their Prepossessions, Errors, and Corruptions, and shutting them up in a State of almost incurable Ignorance and Depravity; not only rendering them averse to the Means which are proper to deliver them from this State, but making Them to glory and rejoice in it, as the most excellent and blessed Condition in which they can possibly be.

Besides

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Besides these pernicious Consequences of Superstition to the Minds and Tempers of Men, there are some other very mischievous Effects of it, which likewise deserve to be noticed. One of these is, its exposing Religion to the Scorn and Contempt of profane Men. A true and rational Piety is certainly a Thing of the highest Excellence in itself, and the greatest Ornament of every Mind, in which it is found. But a false Piety, or a superstitious Devotion has nothing lovely or engaging in it, but must necessarily be distasteful to a Man of true Judgment, and always give a Handle to Persons of vain and irreligious Minds to despise and deride true Religion itself, (which such never distinguish from its Counterfeit) and to run into the Extreme of an open Impiety and atheistical Conversation, which is the best Security, as they imagine, against those extravagant Absurdities and shocking Immoralities, which, they see so many, under a Colour of Sanctity and Devotion, so apt to fall into.

Another mischievous Effect of gross Superstition, is its dishonouring the human Nature. As a rational and steady Devotion contributes greatly to the Dignity and Improvement

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provement of our Nature, to the purifying, enlivening, and strengthening of our several Powers and Affections; so the Reverse of it, a blind and immoral Superstition, degrades our Nature, and sinks us below our Rank in the Creation, depresses and corrupts those Faculties and Dispositions in us, which when duly cultivated and exerted, are our highest Perfection and Glory, and makes us act so absurdly or wickedly, that we must appear very mean or hateful, in the Eyes of superior Intelligences, and even of all the wiser and better Part of our own Kind.

The last unhappy Consequence of Superstition which I shall mention, is, its depriving Men of their Liberty, and injuring them greatly even in their temporal Interests. It begets such Ignorance and Stupidity, such Lowness and Baseness of Mind in Men, as naturally prepare them for a State of Slavery, and give the greatest Advantages for bringing them into it, which are always laid hold on, and improved against them, till they are effectually oppressed both in Mind and Body, and sunk into the most spiritless, abject, poor, and every way wretched Condition in which Mankind can be conceived to be. Who-

ever

ever have attended to the Rise and Progress of the great Tyrannies, whether spiritual or temporal, which have been in the World, must be sensible of the Truth of this Fact; it being plain that these Tyrannies have usually had their firmest Foundation in the Ignorance and religious Delusions of Men, and that one main Expedient of raising them to the Height of arbitrary and oppressive Power, has been the continuing their Vassals in a miserable State of Darkness and Blindness, and inuring them to the Practices of an absurd and false Devotion.

III. The *Third* Thing proposed, was to consider the Reasons, which should make us guard against Superstition, and oppose it. And this is a Point, which may be dispatched in few Words: For,

First, The Reasons of guarding against the more gross and flagrant Superstitions, must be exceedingly plain and strong, from what has been represented under the last Head. Whoever considers the fatal Tendency, and dismal Consequences of such Superstitions, if he intends to prevent the greatest Destruction from falling upon his Mind, and consults the Dignity and Happiness

SER. 2. *pinels of his Nature, either in this, or another*
VII. *ther* Life, must see the absolute Necessity
 of watching against, and withstanding them
 in himself; and if he has any Compassion
 and Benevolence, any Desire to save Men
 from the most deplorable Ruin, both in
 their spiritual and temporal Interests; if he
 has any Concern for the Propagation of true
 Religion and Virtue, and the Prevalence of
 those Principles and Dispositions, which are
 of the highest Importance to the Order and
 Happiness of Society, as well as the Per-
 fection and Felicity of Individuals; he must
 certainly resist the Growth and Progress of
 them in the World. Indeed there is hardly
 any thing which Persons of great Abilities
 are under stronger Obligations of attempt-
 ing, than the delivering Men from gross
 and destructive Superstitions; nor is there
 any Work more worthy of the most ge-
 nerous and heroick Minds. Whoever con-
 tribute to the Advancement of it in any
 high Degree, are to be ranked among the
 greatest Benefactors of the World, whose
 Characters must ever be revered, and shine
 with a distinguished Glory in the History
 of Mankind.

*Secondly, The Reasons of guarding against
 the lower Instances of Superstition, are like-
 wise*

wise very obvious. For, as all Superstition, even in that Degree, which is consistent with a general good State of Mind, gives at least a vain Trouble to the Persons under the Power of it, and deprives them of the Pleasure which a more reasonable Exercise of Piety would afford them; as such a Weakness is also a Blemish in their Characters, and furnishes some Pretence to the Adversaries of Religion to condemn it: Several of the same Reasons which oblige Men to oppose the flagrant and most pernicious Kinds of Superstition, hold, for their opposing in a lower Degree, even the most tolerable and harmless Instances of it; especially when it is considered, that it is of the Nature of Superstition to propagate and increase itself, that there is a Danger lest the Poison of it, from a small Beginning, should in Time spread itself through all the Powers of the Soul, one Error and Irregularity leading on to greater Errors and Irregularities, till at last all rational Notions are in a great Measure obliterated, the Affections corrupted, and little remains in the Mind but a gross Blindness and Depravity.

IV. The last general Point, is to lay down the Methods of preventing, or remedying Superstition.

From

SERMON From what has been observed above, it
 VII. must be already plain, that the Cure of
 gross and inveterate Superstitions is a Mat-
 ter of extreme Difficulty; as the Mind is
 exceedingly stupified and debased by them,
 and rendered averse to the Means necessary
 to deliver it from the Power of them. The
 Prevention of Superstition is much easier
 than the Remedy of it; and if due Care
 was taken by those who have the For-
 mation of the Minds of Youth, to instil
 into them true and worthy Notions of the
 Supreme Being, and his Government of the
 World; to accustom them to a sound and
 impartial Exercise of their Reason on Sub-
 jects of Religion, to keep their Sense of
 moral Good and Evil pure and lively in
 them, and to put them upon their Guard
 against the Influence of seducing Passions,
 there would be but little Reason to com-
 plain of the Prevalence of this Evil: But as
 it is the Unhappiness of the greatest Part of
 Men, to be either altogether neglected in
 their Education, and suffered to take up
 whatever Notions, Tradition, Custom, the
 Fashion of the Times, or the prevailing
 Bent of their own Minds suggest to them
 in Matters of Religion, or to be put under
 the Care of Persons, who instead of in-
 structing

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frustrating them in rational Principles of Piety, give them, either through Ignorance or Design, very mistaken and unworthy Views of it; it is necessary not only to watch against the Beginning and Rise of Superstition, but to check and correct it, if it can be done, after it has spread itself among Men, which, from the uncultivated and perverted State of their Minds, it must be expected always in some Degree to do.

The Remedies of Superstition are easily prescribed, and if they could be as easily applied and used, this Distemper would soon be cured and removed. The Things chiefly necessary for the Cure of Superstition are, 1. The free Use of Reason, for forming a true Idea of the Deity, and the Homage which Mankind naturally owe to Him; for rejecting all Notions upon these Subjects, unworthy of the Divine Nature, however supported by Tradition, the Authority of Ancestors, or of those who have had the Name of venerable Guides in Religion; and admitting only such as are agreeable to the Perfections which the Constitution of the Universe clearly points out to us in the Author and Governor of it, and to the Dispositions and Affections which we naturally feel in ourselves upon the

View

SERMON. View and Contemplation of those Perfections. VII.

2. The Taking our Accounts of the positive Duties of religious Worship, enjoined by Christianity, not from the Imaginations, or Systems of any Men, or Parties of Men, but only from the Declarations of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles, who alone were authorized and duly qualified to fix and settle them; so that whatever Forms or Ceremonies may accompany the Performance of these Duties, nothing but what they have declared to belong to the Nature of them, is to be considered by us, as of Divine Institution, and as directly a Matter of Conscience and Religion. 3. The Keeping the Principle of moral Discernment in us, or our natural Conscience of Good and Evil always vigorous and uncorrupted, that it may be according to its Rank in our Constitution, the Light and Guide of Life in us, leading us on in an uniform Course of true Piety and Virtue, prevailing over every false Appearance of Devotion, and controuling all the Desires and Passions, which, at any time, rise up in us, in Opposition to its Dictates and Directions. Lastly, The Standing upon our Guard against the Men who lie in wait to deceive; the receiving with great Caution the Instructions which may

may be offered to us in Religion, by those S.E.M.
whose Situation and Circumstances render VII.
it probable, that they intend to mislead us
into pernicious Errors, for some Ends and
Interests of their own; rather than to guide
us to the Knowledge of the Truth, for our
Benefit and Happiness.

These Directions, if duly observed and
practised, would be effectual Means of de-
stroying the Superstition of Men, and secu-
ring them against a Relapse into it for the
future.

But the Difficulty is to engage those,
who are in any great measure infected with
Superstition, to make use of the Means ne-
cessary for working the Cure of it: And as
to this, it is not, perhaps, possible to lay
down the Rules which are to be observed
in all Cases. Every one who intends so
great a Benefit to his Neighbour, as the
putting him into the Way of getting rid of
inveterate Superstitions, must apply to him
in the Methods, which from his Knowledge
of the Circumstances of the Person, he
judges to be most likely to prove successful.
But in general, it seems necessary, for a-
wakening the Minds of Men out of that
Lethargy into which gross Superstition
throws them, and making them exert their

SERM. **VII.** *Faculties to free themselves from the Power of it, to give them some just Impression of the Dignity and Importance of the rational and moral Powers of our Nature, and the strict Obligations we are under to cultivate and improve them for the Ends for which they were given; particularly for acquiring a Knowledge of the Deity, and the Duty which we owe immediately to him; together with a Sense of the Baseness and Ingratitude we are chargeable with, and the Misery we bring upon ourselves, whenever we neglect the Cultivation of these Powers, or prostitute them to any unworthy Purposes. After this, we may try to reason with the Superstitious, upon those Instances of their Superstition, of which they appear to be least tenacious, and to convince them of the Absurdity of them, from their Inconsistency with the natural Dictates of their own Understandings and Consciences, or the plain Declarations of Revelation: And if once we can open a Passage for any Light to enter into their Minds, we may proceed upon this Foundation to communicate to them greater Degrees of it, to bring them on to an Examination of other Branches of their Superstition, and an Acknowledgment of their*
Errors;

Errors; and so by Degrees form such a Love of Truth and Ingenuity of Temper in them, as will dispose them to go on in reviewing their whole Scheme of Religion, and may in Time be the Means of freeing them entirely from their Delusions. Besides these, there is another general Rule to be observed, in persuading Men to exert their Powers, and to use all proper Means for delivering themselves from Superstition, which is, to treat them with great Gentleness and Kindness; to proceed with them, not in the Way of Haughtiness and Power, but in the Spirit of Meekness and Love; to satisfy them, that what we propose by the Pains we take about them, is not any Interest of our own, but their Good and Happiness; to bear along with them, after the Example of the Divine Author of our Religion, and all the wisest Instructors of Mankind, in such of their Prejudices and Mistakes, as they are extremely fond of, and are consistent with an honest Heart; while we express ourselves with a just Severity against those Instances of Error and Delusion in them, which are destructive of a good State of Mind, and urge them to an impious and wicked Conduct, and which their own Consciences,

SERMON. If they are at all to be touched, must be
 VII. soonest alarmed at, upon a true Representation of their evil Nature, and pernicious Tendency.

These, in general, seem to be the most probable Methods of prevailing on the Superstitious, to assert and use the Right which they have, both as Men and Christians, of judging for themselves in Religion, and to do whatever other Things are proper for rescuing their Minds from the Bondage in which they are held; and though they should not be attended with all the Success which is to be desired, yet, if they are effectual, in any Measure, for recovering Men, sunk in Ignorance and Error, to the Exercise of their natural Faculties, for discovering to them any of their grosser and more pernicious Mistakes, and raising in them any rational Sentiments and truly religious Affections, there is still sufficient Reason for continuing them; it being of great Consequence, to throw even but a little Light upon Minds almost wholly benighted, and to render the Service, which Men offer to the Deity, in any Degree reasonable and useful, instead of being altogether absurd, and hurtful both to Themselves and Others.

I shall

I shall now conclude with a few general **SERMON**
Reflections upon this whole Subject. **VII.**

We may see the Necessity of distinguishing Religion from Superstition, that the one may not suffer for the Sake of the other. Nothing has been more injurious to the Cause of Religion, than the confounding it with the Delusions and Extravagancies which have been vended under the Name of it, and have indeed been often contended for with greater Eagerness and Zeal, than the plainest Points of the Gospel, or than the first and most incontestable Principles of moral Piety and Virtue themselves. This is the Thing which has prejudiced Multitudes against Religion, and rendered the Defence of it so burthensome to those of its Advocates, who have not known, or have not cared, to separate the *Wheat from the Chaff*, the pure Principles of natural Piety and Humanity, and the uncorrupted Doctrines and Laws of Christianity, from the absurd Inventions, the contradictory Systems, and the vain or immoral Institutions or Observances of ignorant or wicked Men; and which has likewise given the greatest Occasions of Boasting to *Atheists* and *Infidels*, who have often fancied, or at least, would have the

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World to believe, that they have demonstrated the whole Structure of natural and revealed Religion, while they have only detected some enthusiastical, or superstitious Dreams and Follies, and combated Things, which are so far from having any Connexion with the Cause of true Religion, that they are irreconcilable to, and subversive of it. It should, therefore, be the Business of all who wish well to Christianity, and intend to prepare the Way for its universal Reception among Men, to present it to the World in its native Purity, distinguishing carefully what really belongs to it, from those human Mixtures and Additions, which have defaced the Beauty of it, and given it an uncouth and ungainly Appearance. It should likewise be the Care of those, who pretend to oppose Religion, if they would merit the Character of judicious and fair Adversaries, to point their Arguments, only against the real Principles and Duties of natural or revealed Religion; against the natural Distinction between moral Good and Evil; against the Existence of a Deity, and any of his essential Attributes, against the Worship of him, with an inward Veneration and Love, as well as external Addresses in Prayers and Praises,

Praises, and an universal Integrity and Goodness in our Conversation in the World; against the Use of a Supernatural Revelation, the Divine Original of Christianity, or any of the Doctrines and Institutions of *Jesus Christ* in the Simplicity in which they are delivered in the Gospel. These are the Points which should be attacked and overturned by the Adversaries of Religion, before they can succeed in their Designs; and if upon these Subjects, they have any thing to offer, deserving Attention, it becomes us to hear them; which we may very well do, without a Suspicion that the Cause of Religion will suffer in the Issue. But if instead of this, they will content themselves with refuting foolish and idle Fancies, exposing pious Cheats, and declaiming against Priestcraft and other Immoralities, which have been practised under a Pretence of Religion, and after having done so, will boast of Victory over Revelation and all Religion, we need never envy them the Glory of such a Triumph: Every Man of Reflection must see, that Religion is not in the least hurt by them, and that their impotent Attempts against it, only discover their own Want of Sense, or Honesty.

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2. From what has been said, we may learn how to answer a Question, which has been debated both in ancient and modern Times, whether *Atheism*, or *Superstition* is the more hurtful Thing to Society? This indeed seems to be a Point of greater Curiosity than Use; because it is certain that both *Atheism* and *Superstition* are very bad Things, and it is no sort of Excuse for the One, to say that the Other is worse. However, as the Adversaries of Religion have been fond of determining the Question in favour of *Atheism*, imagining that from this Decision they can draw some Advantages to their Cause; it will not be amiss, upon this Occasion, briefly to point out the true Answer of the Question, and to shew what Consequences are to be deduced from it. For answering the Question, we must consider, as was observed above, that *Superstition* is an equivocal Word, and that the Things signified by it, are of different Kinds and Degrees. Now the grossest Kinds and Instances of *Superstition*, which universally corrupt the Consciences and natural Affections of Men, and under the Appearance of Devotion, prompt them to the most horrid Acts of Injustice and Inhumanity, are plainly more pernicious than *Atheism*,

Atheism, which, though it produces a most terrible Devastation in the Mind, and leaves it, if it has any Reflection, in the most comfortless State; yet, seems not to have any positive Influence for invenoming the Spirits of Men, and urging them to Barbarity and Cruelty against one another. But as for that sort of Superstition, which consists only in an undue Zeal for Speculations and Opinions, and an unnecessary Punctuality about the Forms and Circumstances of Devotion, and the like, but which, at the same time, leaves Room for the Belief of all the great Principles of Religion, and the Practice of the moral Duties of Life; This, though it indeed allays the good Influence of the Principles of Religion, and in some Degree sours the Tempers of Men, making them both more uneasy in Themselves, and more disagreeable to Others, than otherwise they would be; yet is, beyond all Comparison, preferable to Atheism; it being infinitely better for the World, that Men should live under even the lower Degrees of the Power of true Religion, rather than that they should feel nothing of the Force of it, and be left entirely to the Conduct of their natural Principles and Passions, which, in that disordered and corrupted State of Mind, which settled Atheism, or Irreligion, pre-supposes,

SERMON supposes, will certainly lead them into innumerable Acts of Vice and Wickedness.

Now from this Resolution of the Case, it is plain, that the only Conclusions that can be justly drawn are these; that neither Atheism, nor Superstition is to be in the least favourably thought of, but that both are to be guarded against by Mankind, with an Earnestness proportionable to the evil Consequences of them; that Atheism, producing uniformly the most mischievous Effects, as it releases Men from those Obligations and Restraints which are of the greatest Use for the good Conduct of Life, and throws the most dismal Gloom over all human Affairs, is ever to be opposed with the most vigorous and steady Zeal; that the immoral and inhuman Superstitions, which supplant Virtue, and extinguish the social Affections of Men, and fill them with destructive Rage and Fury, are to be opposed still, if it be possible, with a greater Zeal; and that even the most innocent Instances of Superstition are to be withstood, though with a due Indulgence to human Infirmities, on account of their bad Influence on the Tempers of Men, and the Quiet of their Minds; and that every one should endeavour to establish himself in those

Of Superstition.

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those rational Principles of Piety, which SERM.
are equally remote from Irreligion, and a VII.
false Devotion, and which will have the
most excellent Effect upon his own Virtue
and Happiness, as well as the Order and
Peace of Society.

3. Lastly, We may here take Notice of
the Advantages of the *Protestant* Religion,
compared with that professed in the Church
of *Rome*, with respect to its Tendency to
Superstition. That many who have made
Profession of the *Reformed* Religion, have
been deeply tinged with Superstition, is
a Matter not to be denied; but this has
been the Fault of the Men, and not of
their Religion; no Part of which gives the
least Countenance or Encouragement to such
an Infirmary: On the contrary, the essential
Principles of *Protestantism*, concerning the
Right and Duty of every Man, to use his
own Understanding in judging of Religion;
to trace back the Principles of natural Re-
ligion to the clear Maxims of Reason in
which they are founded, and to *search the*
Scriptures for the additional Light which
they have thrown upon any of these Prin-
ciples, and for ascertaining the Doctrines
and Precepts of pure Revelation; and to
receive nothing as a Part of his Religion
which

SERMON which is not supported by the Authority of
VII. God, discovered by the Light of Nature,
 at the Declarations of his Word, these
 Principles, I say, which lie at the Founda-
 tion of the Protestant Cause, are the very
 best Preservatives against Superstition, and,
 if uniformly pursued and put in Practice,
 would effectually banish it from among
 Men. The Case is very different in the
 Church of Rome, where there is not only
 the grossest Superstition in Practice, but
 where the Doctrines and Principles of their
 Religion are most evidently calculated, for
 extinguishing the Light both of Reason and
 Revelation, for shutting up the Minds of
 Men in the most dismal Ignorance and
 Darkness, and the most absolute Submission
 to the Authority of Persons, who, accord-
 ing to the Exigencies of their Affairs, can,
 under a Mask of Piety, either busy them
 with unmanly Observances, uneasy and bur-
 then some to themselves, or fire them with
 a diabolical Rage against others, the Con-
 sequences of which have often been most
 terribly felt in many Parts of the World:
 So that the very Fountain of their Devotion
 is corrupted, *the Light that is in them is*
Darkness, and their Religion itself a Mass
 of Absurdity and Wickedness, which is cer-
 tainly

tainly the most dreadful Misery that can befall Mankind; It becomes us, therefore, to have a due Sense of the Blessings which we enjoy, by being educated and instructed in the Principles of the Protestant Religion or of Reformed Christianity, by which we are delivered from the most deplorable Corruptions, and the most cruel Bondage, and put into the Way, if we be not wanting to ourselves, of keeping clear of all gross Errors and Superstitions, of worshipping God with a rational and manly Piety, and serving him, without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him, all the Days of our Life: And from a just Consideration of the Value of these Blessings, let us be ever zealous, both to secure them to ourselves, and to make others Partakers of them; and above all, let us be careful to adorn our Profession with a proportionable Behaviour, to shew out of a good Conversation our Works with Meekness of Wisdom; to guard against every Approach towards the earthly, sensual, and devilish Spirit of false and corrupt Religions; and to make it plain that we are governed by the Dictates of the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy.

S E R.

SERM.

VN.

Luke i.

74, 75.

Jam. iii.

13.

ver. 15.

ver. 17.

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SERMON VIII.

The moral Value and Worth of
Faith considered, and particu-
larly exemplified in the Belief
of our Saviour's Resurrection.

JOHN XX. 39.

*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet
have believed.*

SERM.
VIII.

Preached
on Easter
Sunday,
1741.

THE Occasion of these Words was
this: St. Thomas, one of the Apo-
stles, happened to be absent, when
our Saviour first appeared to his Disciples
in a Body after his Resurrection, and being
afterwards informed by them that they had
seen the Lord, he would not, upon their
Report, assent to a Thing which he thought
so improbable as the Resurrection of our
Saviour, and insisted upon his having a
very particular Proof of it, before he would
believe it. Our Lord, in great Condescen-
sion

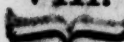
sion to his Weakness, soon afterwards, gave SERM.
him in the Presence of the other Apostles, VIII.
that Proof of his Resurrection which he
desired; upon which, *Thomas* professing
his Conviction and Belief of it, our Saviour
replied, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me,*
thou hast believed; blessed are they that have
not seen, and yet have believed; as if he had
said to him, "You have been too scrupu-
"lous in not admitting the Truth of my
"Resurrection upon the credible Testi-
"mony of my Disciples concerning it, and
"in believing it only after you had such a
"sensible Demonstration of it, as left no
"Room for any Doubt or Inquiry, and in-
"resistibly forced your Assent: Those Per-
"sons, I must tell you, will discover a
"more happy and commendable Temper,
"who will believe my Resurrection, upon
"such an Evidence of it as lays a just
"Foundation for a rational Assent, though
"it should not be so convincing and satis-
"factory to the Mind as the sensible Proof
"which you have had of this Fact, must
"necessarily be."

Now as we all are (as all who have gone
before us in the Profession of Christianity,
since the Time that our Saviour ceased to
be visible upon Earth, have also been) in
the

SERM. the Case of the Persons whom our Saviour
VIII. here refers to, who must believe his Resur-
 rection without having had a sensible Proof
 of it, we may have some Satisfaction in re-
 flecting, that though we have not that clear
 and strong Evidence to support our Belief
 of this Article of our Religion, which the
 Apostles and other Eye-witnesses of the
 Fact had to support theirs, yet our Faith of
 it is not the less valuable for the want of
 such Evidence, but has indeed a greater
 Degree of Worth and Excellence in it, as
 it is the Result of a purely rational and fair
 Inquiry. At the same Time, as this will
 appear to be a great Paradox to some, who
 will be so far from allowing the Belief of
 such an extraordinary Fact, as the Resur-
 rection of a Person from the Dead, upon
 any Report or Relation concerning it, to
 be a Thing any way meritorious or com-
 mendable, that they will look upon it as a
 sure Argument of Ignorance, Credulity, and
 Enthusiasm, it will be necessary to inquire
 into the Reasons of this Assertion of our
 Saviour, or to shew how our Belief of his
 Resurrection arising from a free and candid
 Examination of the rational Proofs of it,
 is really a Thing valuable in itself, and pre-
 ferable to the Faith which the Apostles had
 of

of it, which was founded upon the Information of their Senses. This I shall first do, and then proceed to some important Observations and Reflections which this Subject will afford us.

In order to see how our Belief of the Resurrection of our Saviour, arising from a free and impartial Examination of the rational Proofs of it, is a Thing truly valuable and preferable to the Belief which the Apostles received of it from the Information of their Senses, we must consider a little the general Nature of Faith, and from whence the Worth of it is derived. Now Faith in the most strict Sense is taken for the Assent which we give to Facts or Propositions, upon such Testimony concerning them, as, after a deliberate and fair Examination, appears to be credible: And in a more general and popular Sense, it frequently signifies our Assent to Facts, which we are assured of from the Perceptions of our Senses and our own Experience, as well as to Propositions which we know to be true by the Use of our intelligent and rational Faculties. Now it is certain that the Assent of the Understanding, whether it be founded upon the immediate Perceptions of the Senses, or upon a clear rational Evidence,

SERM. Evidence, is in its own Nature indifferent;
VIII.  having neither moral Good, nor Evil in it; procuring a Man neither Approbation, nor Dislike from any Observers. Indeed this is a Thing which does not depend on the Determination of our Wills, any more than the flowing of our Blood, the Digestion of our Food, or any of the most necessary Motions in our Bodies, and is therefore no more to be regarded in any moral Account and Estimation, than these other Things are. The Virtue of Faith, therefore, is not derived from the Assent which the Mind must always give, according to the Degree of Evidence which is laid before it: And if there was nothing more included in the Notion of Faith than this Assent, it would be very vain to make an Inquiry concerning the moral Worth or Value of it at all. But Faith is a complex Thing, which, besides the Assent of the Understanding, which finishes and compleats it, and is therefore principally taken Notice of in the Definitions usually given of it, comprehends several moral Dispositions, such as Probity and Diligence in searching for the Truth; a Docility of Mind, and an Openness to Conviction; a humble Dependance on God the Fountain
of

of Light and Truth, for directing us in our **Ser. 12**
 Inquiries, and a submissive and obedient **M. V.**
 Temper towards Him. These are Dispo-
 sitions which the Imperfection of our Un-
 derstanding, the Weakness of our Reason,
 and the many Difficulties, which, from se-
 veral Causes, we meet with in the Investi-
 gation of Truth, render necessary to be put
 in Practice by us, for obtaining such Evi-
 dence as can be the Foundation of a ratio-
 nal Assent: They are therefore to be consi-
 dered as the Principles of a true Faith, and
 are indeed the Things which in a moral
 Account make it to be of Worth and Im-
 portance. Besides this, every Man of Re-
 flection must know the close Connexion
 which Truth has with the Virtue and Hap-
 piness of Mankind: A sincere Love of it
 therefore, which makes us unprejudiced
 and impartial, as well as attentive and di-
 ligent in acquiring the Knowledge of it,
 must be a very amiable and commendable
 Disposition. Indeed Mankind naturally ap-
 prove of this Quality, and esteem it as an
 Argument of a generous and noble Mind.
 This was the Foundation of the Praise
 which the sacred Historian bestowed upon
 the *Jews of Berea*, and the Thing which **Acts xvii.**
 rendered their Belief of the Gospel a wor-
 11.

SERMON. thy and mainly A.G. On the other Hand,
 VIII. the want of a sincere Love of Truth, of a
 truly inquisitive and reachable Disposition
 of Mind; or, which is the same Thing,
 the refusing to examine Principles and Doc-
 trines of great Importance, when fairly pro-
 posed, and to attend to the Evidence which
 supports them, is what renders the Inside-
 lity of Men criminal, and the Ground of
 those severe Threatenings which are de-
 nounced against it in several Places of the
 New Testament. Thus after our Saviour
 had spoken to the Jews as never Man spake,
 and had done among them the Works that no
 other Man ever did, the Foot upon which
 he put their Condemnation for not believ-
 ing in him was this, that Light had come
 into the World, and Men loved Darkness
 rather than Light, because their Deeds were
 evil. And when St. Paul told the Thessa-
 lonians that some would be damned who be-
 lieved not the Truth, he at the same Time
 assigned this Reason for it, because they re-
 ceived not the Love of the Truth, but had
 Pleasure in Unrighteousness.

Now from this general Account of the
 Nature and Excellence of Faith, we may
 easily see how our Belief of the Resurrec-
 tion of our Saviour, proceeding from a free
 and

Joh. iii.
19.

2Theff. ii.
10, 12.

and impartial Inquiry into the rational Evi-
dences of it, is really valuable, and prefer-
able to the Belief which the Apostles re-
ceived of it from the Testimony of their
Senses. For Faith being an Assent upon
convincing Evidence, and the Worth of it,
in a moral Consideration, arising from that
Love of Truth, and that impartial and di-
ligent Use of our intelligent and reasonable
Powers, which are presupposed or included
in a rational Assent, it is plain that our Be-
lief of the Resurrection of our Lord, must
be worthy and commendable, in propor-
tion to the Degrees of those good Qualities
which it comprehends, and must, in point
of Excellence, exceed the Belief which the
Apostles had of this Fact, as far as it has
more of Ingenuity, and of a fair and gene-
rous Exercise of Reason, than their Faith
of the Fact included. The Apostles had
the Testimony not only of one, but of se-
veral of their Senses, to assure them of the
Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection: They
saw him, they touched and handled him,
and heard him discourse after he rose from
the Dead. They, therefore, had a Proof
of his Resurrection which prevented In-
quiry and the Exercise of Reason, and vio-
lently extorted their Assent, so that there

SERMON. could be but little Virtue in their Belief of
 VIII. this Fact upon such strong and overbearing

Evidence. But the Evidence upon which our Faith of the Resurrection of our Lord depends, is much inferior in Clearness and Force to the Proof which the Apostles had of it : Though it will prove abundantly satisfactory to Those who attentively and impartially examine it, yet it does not immediately command our Assent, but leaves room for Consideration, and the Use of our intelligent Powers, and for our exercising a Love of Truth, and those other good Dispositions, which always enter into the Notion of Faith considered as a moral Virtue. This will appear by considering what the Evidence is, upon which we can rationally believe the Resurrection of our Saviour. Now this is, in general, credible Testimony. It is plain that Testimony is the only Evidence which we can have of any Facts, of which we have not an immediate personal Knowledge, nor any rational Proof or Presumption from the Natures and Connexions of Things, and that This, though it is not the highest Principle or Ground of Assent to the human Mind, yet is a natural and just one ; we being so formed, that we rely upon Testimony, when

when it appears credible, securely and without Hesitation, though the Conviction which it affords, is not equal to That, which we receive, either from the immediate Report of our Senses, or from Demonstration. But as we may be easily misled, or deceived in the Assent which we give upon this Foundation, whoever acts wisely and becomingly, will take Care, at least in the Case of all extraordinary and important Facts proposed to his Belief, that he goes upon a sure or reasonable Ground, before he admits and believes them. Now the Resurrection of our Saviour being a Fact of this Sort, if we would give a rational Assent to it, we must first satisfy ourselves as to the Credibility of the Report or Testimony upon which we admit it. And in obtaining Satisfaction in this Matter, it will be proper to proceed by some such Steps as these.

First, To consider whether the Fact itself of our Saviour's Resurrection be a Thing possible, which it seems some both of the ancient and modern Adversaries of Christianity have, according to the Principles of their Philosophy, alledged it not to be. If this should prove to be the Case, all Inquiries about the Evidences of our Lord's Resurrection

SER. M. resurrection will be superseded, it being cer-
 tain that no positive Testimonies can ren-
 der a Fact credible, which in the very No-
 tion of it is contradictory or impossible.
 This however is a Point which will require
 no great Discussion from Persons, who ar-
 gue, not from fictitious Hypotheses, but
 from the Principles of Common Sense, Ex-
 perience, and Analogy: Such must soon
 conclude that the Resurrection of our Sa-
 viour, however an extraordinary Effect of
 the Divine Power, yet by no Means im-
 plies an Absurdity or Impossibility; there
 being indeed nothing more hard to be con-
 ceived in it, than in the Bodies and Souls
 of Men being at first formed and united,
 and put into that regular Method of Inter-
 course, which is necessary to the Perform-
 ance of the several Functions of Life.

In the next Place, it will be proper to
 inquire whether any End, worthy of the
 Divine Interposition, was to be answered
 by such an Event as the Resurrection of our
 Saviour. As it is not at all probable that
 the Governor of the World would inter-
 pose with a miraculous Exertion of his
 Power, but for promoting some very valu-
 able Purpose to be perceived by Those, for
 whose Benefit his Power is so extraordina-
 rily

Belief of the Resurrection of Christ.

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VIII

rely exalted, it must always be of Use in examining the Evidence of Miracles alleged to be wrought by God; to consider whether any End, deserving an extraordinary Interposition of the Deity, is to be served by them. The Perception of such an End must take off the Prejudices which are so apt to arise in the Mind against such uncommon and unusual Operations, and facilitate our Belief of them upon proper Evidence being laid before us of their Truth and Reality. Now whoever inquires whether any Purpose, worthy of an extraordinary Exertion of the Divine Power, was to be brought about by the Resurrection of our Lord, will find that there are two Purposes, among others, mentioned in the New Testament, as effected by the Resurrection of our Saviour, which are evidently of this Sort. The first is, the *declaring him*, as St. Paul speaks, *to be the Son of God*, or the Rom. i. 5. Justifying his Claims and Pretensions, the Giving him Authority as a Teacher and Lawgiver instructed and commissioned by God, and the attesting solemnly the Truth and Divine Institution of his Religion. The other is, the giving the World a clear and sensible Proof of a future State, and *assur-* 1 Cor. xv.
ing to all good Christians a glorious Resur- 20--23.

SERM. *redtion to immortal Life.* It is very plain
VIII. that the Resurrection of our Saviour, sup-
 posing it to be true, is an Event admir-
 ably calculated for serving both these Pur-
 poses; and it must be as plain to any who
 know the State of the World before the
 Coming of our Saviour, and how much
 the Generality of Men stood in need of an
 authoritative Instruction in the Doctrines
 and Duties of Religion, and particularly in
 the great Doctrine of a future State, that
 the accomplishing these Ends, even by a
 miraculous Interposition, was a Thing high-
 ly worthy of the most gracious Parent and
 Governor of Mankind.

After having thus satisfied ourselves as to
 the Possibility of our Saviour's Resurrec-
 tion, and likewise as to what may be called
 the Expediency of it, we must then take
 the positive Testimony or Report, upon
 which our Belief of this Fact depends, into
 Consideration; and in examining the Cre-
 dibility or Truth of this, there are two
 Things which will naturally require our
 Attention: 1. The Qualifications of the
 Witnesses who delivered this Testimony.
 2. The Conveyance of their Testimony
 down to us.

As

As for the *first* Particular, the Qualifications of the Witnesses of our Lord's Resurrection. These are reducible to two Heads: Their Information as to the Fact, of which they gave Testimony; and their Integrity in declaring their real Sense and Judgment concerning it.

As to the Information of the Apostles, the chosen Witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection, touching the Fact of which they give Testimony: This is a Thing about which we must very easily be satisfied. For the Resurrection of our Lord having been a plain Object of Sense, and the Apostles having had the Evidence of several of their Senses, not only at one Time, and in a transient Way, but very frequently and for a considerable Time at once, to convince them that the very Person, whose Followers they had been before his Death, was restored to Life after they had known him to be dead, unless it can be said that they had no Use of their Senses and Understanding, but were perfect Visionaries and Enthusiasts, which, though it has been sometimes insinuated, is evidently a most injurious and false Suggestion, it must be allowed that they were very fully assured of the Fact of which they make Report, and

SERMON that it is most absurd to suppose them mistaken in their Judgment of it.

VIII. And as to their Integrity in declaring their real Sense and Conviction concerning the Resurrection of our Lord: This can hardly be called in question by any who consider the strong Proofs which they gave of their Disinterestedness and Honesty, not only by the general Course of an unblameable and virtuous Conversation, but by publishing this Fact at the Command of our Saviour, and from a Sense of the Duty which they owed to him, though they saw that their doing so would deprive them of all the Comforts of the World, and draw upon them the greatest Misfortunes and Calamities that could befall them in Life; by publishing it in the most open manner, upon the Spot where it had happened, and before the Men who had unjustly put our Saviour to Death, who had the greatest Inclination and Ability to have detected the Cheat, and exposed them as Impostors if their Report had not been evidently true; by continuing to assert the Resurrection of our Lord, after very grievous sufferings had actually befallen them for doing it; and by laying down their Lives, as at least they generally did, for a farther Confirmation

tion

tion of their Testimony. That the Apostles gave these Evidences of their Integrity in publishing this Fact of our Saviour's Resurrection, appears not only from the History of the Gospel, but from all the Accounts which any Writers have given us of them, and these are indeed such Evidences of their Sincerity, as must, with Men who have any Knowledge of human Nature, put it beyond all Doubt. Their Conduct in this Affair, we may venture to say, is never rationally to be accounted for upon any Supposition but this, that they were fully convinced that what they asserted was true, and that it was the Will of God that they should declare it to the World.

And what is still the highest Justification of the Apostles, and the clearest Proof of their Truth and Integrity in publishing the Resurrection of our Saviour, is their having had their Report of it confirmed by the Testimony of God himself, who *bore them* Heb. ii. 4. *Witness with Signs and Wonders, and with diverse Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost.* That the Apostles were inspired and assisted with an extraordinary Divine Spirit in executing their Office as the Witnesses and Ministers of Christ, is a Point beyond Dispute, not only from its being very particu-
larly

SECT. M. larly related in the New Testament, but
 VIII. from its being related in it, concerning
 some of them, in such a Manner, that the
 Truth of it must have been denied, or at
 least brought into Debate, which yet it ne-
 ver appears to have been, if the Fact had not
 been altogether certain and incontestable;
 and from the Monuments which still re-
 main of such Inspiration, in those Pro-
 phecies which we meet with in their Wri-
 tings, concerning the State of Things under
 the Dispensation of Christianity, which
 have been in part already fulfilled, and are
 gradually obtaining, as may be evident to
 the Observation of every Man, a more full
 and compleat Accomplishment. And as
 the extraordinary Gifts with which the
 Apostles were endowed, were of the greatest
 Use to them in carrying on the Business in
 which they were employed, so they are the
 strongest Evidence of their Authority, and
 of the Truth of the Accounts which they
 gave both of the Miracles and Doctrine of
 our Saviour; it being by no means recon-
 cileable to our Notions of the Divine At-
 tributes, to suppose that God would give
 such great Credentials, as the miraculous
 Gifts of the *Holy Spirit*, to Persons con-
 cerned in a Deceit or Imposture.

As

As for the Conveyance of the Testimony SERM. VII.
of the Apostles concerning the Resurrection
of our Saviour (of which we have seen that
they were very competent and well qualified
Witnesses) down to us, which is the *second*
Point to be considered by us in examining
the Credibility of this Testimony: This
may be made out from the following Con-
siderations. The Testimony of the Apostles
concerning this Fact was put into Wri-
ting by some of themselves, and by some
others who were under their immediate
Direction. This appears from the express
Assertions of the most ancient Christian
Writers, as well as the constant uncon-
trolled Tradition of Christians in all Ages,
and could never be denied by the most con-
siderable of their Adversaries: The Ori-
ginals of the Apostles and Evangelists, were
preserved for a long Time in some Christian
Churches; Copies of them were soon dis-
persed through all Parts of the World, and
have from Time to Time been multiplied,
according as the Necessities of Christians
required: Translations of them were early
made into various Languages: These Books
have all along been the Special Care of
Christians, and were publicly recited in
their religious Assemblies; and Passages
contain-

SERM. containing the most material Facts and

VIII.

Doctrines recorded in them, have been quoted from them, by an infinite Number of Authors, from the Days of the Apostles to this Time. These Considerations, to omit several others, are sufficient to shew us, that the Evangelical Writings must be, in the main, very pure and uncorrupted; and that whatever Mistakes may have been occasioned in them, through the Negligence or Unskilfulness of Transcribers, yet no such gross Corruptions could have happened in them, as can affect the Truth of the Whole, or make us call in Question the principal Facts in them, upon which the Certainty of the Christian Religion depends. We have therefore, very good Reason to think, that the Testimony of the Apostles, recorded in the History of the Gospel, concerning the Resurrection of our Saviour, has been very truly and faithfully transmitted to us. This, to speak very moderately, can no more be doubted by us, than that the Testimony of *Cæsar*, concerning his own most remarkable Transactions, has been truly conveyed to us in his *Commentaries*; or that the Testimony of any ancient Historians of the most unquestioned Authority, has been faithfully delivered to us in their Writings,

Writings, about any of the most important SERM.
Affairs, of which, they tell us, that they VIII.
Themselves were the Witnesses and Spec-
tators *

In this, or in some such Manner, it will be necessary for us to proceed in satisfying ourselves as to the Validity of the Evidence, or the Credibility of the Testimony, upon which we admit the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection, if we would entertain a rational

* If any should object against This, as some have done, that the Account given in the New Testament of the Resurrection of Christ, is in several Particulars inconsistent and contradictory, and that therefore the Whole of it may be looked upon as fabulous; if any, I say, should object thus, it may be asked of the Objector, in what Instances does the Inconsistency of this Account appear? Is there any Contradiction between the sacred Historians, as to the Fact itself, of our Saviour's Resurrection? Do they not all agree in declaring that he really died, and rose again from the Dead? Do any of them deny that the Apostles were the Witnesses of these Things, and that they testified them with the greatest Assurance to the World. In these Points it cannot possibly be said, that they have contradicted one another: And if after this, there should be some Difference, or even an Inconsistency in their Relations of some Circumstances, which have no necessary Connexion with these main Facts, yet this would be no sufficient Foundation for disbelieving these Facts, with any who consider, that Testimonies are every Day admitted, in Causes of great Importance, and in Places where the strictest Regard is had to the Truth of Evidence; when they are clear and consistent in all material Facts and Circumstances, though they vary in some trifling Particulars. Allowing then that it were impossible to reconcile the Accounts, which the Authors of the Gospel-History have given us of some minute Circumstances relating to the Resurrection of our Saviour, such as the Number of Angels who gave the first Notice of it, the Posture in which they appeared to the Women who went to the Sepulchre,

SERMON. tional Belief of this Fact. And now in
 VIII. this Inquiry it is plain, that though we
 meet with such a Proof of our Lord's Resurrection, as may be sufficiently convincing to a serious and attentive Mind, yet is it not so clear and strong as to prevent Consideration and Reflection; but that in Order to our discerning the Force of it, we must use our Reason impartially, and weigh fairly the several Particulars which concur to give Credit to the Testimony of the Apostles in this Case; that we must have an Ingenuity of Temper and a Love of Truth, which will on the one Hand make us careful not

to pulchre, the Order in which the Disciples came to know that their Master was Risen, and perhaps some other Things of no greater Moment; yet this would not affect the Credibility of our Lord's Resurrection itself, in asserting which we find that these Historians are perfectly harmonious and consistent. But there is no Necessity for making this Concession; for there is no such Inconsistency as is pretended in the Accounts which the Sacred Writers have given us even of these smaller Circumstances. It would be too tedious on this Occasion to consider particularly the Objections which have been raised against them on this Head. But it is certain that their whole Relation of our Saviour's Resurrection, and all the Circumstances of it may be made consistent, only by allowing them to speak of different Times, or different Particulars, where there is a seeming Contradiction between them, which may be fairly allowed from the Series of their Narrations, and the like of which is frequently allowed for removing Inconsistencies, or Difficulties, out of several of the ancient Writers.

Since the Writing the above Note, a full and accurate Reconciliation has been made of all these pretended Inconsistencies, in the excellent Observations of G. West, Esq; See likewise Dr. Sykes's Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion.

to be deceived, and on the other free us from all vicious Prejudices, and leave us open to Conviction, and determine us to acquiesce in a truly rational Evidence of the Fact, however it is not so apparent and cogent as to gain the universal Assent of Mankind, or to silence all Cavils, and all Contradiction. Here then we have a full Justification of our Saviour's Assertion in the Text, and see the Reason of his preferring our Belief of the Article of his Resurrection, to the Belief which his Apostles had of it; because our Faith of it is a free and generous Act, the Result of an ingenuous and manly Exercise of our reasonable Powers, including such Principles in it as properly constitute it a moral Virtue: Whereas the Faith of the Apostles in this Point, was the Effect of Necessity, and not of Choice, a Thing forced upon them by the clear and immediate Perceptions of their Senses, which implied nothing of a liberal and ingenuous Disposition, and could not be of any Value in a moral Computation. In another Respect, indeed, the Faith of the Apostles concerning the Resurrection, and the other Miracles of our Saviour, had a great Advantage above Our's, as it was more firmly founded, and therefore more

SERM. likely to be a lively and effectual Principle
VIII. of good Practice in them; but in regard to
 the Morality or Virtue of their believing
 the Resurrection and other Miracles of our
 Lord, and our believing these Things, our
 Faith plainly deserves the Preference, and
 has an Advantage which Theirs in the
 Nature of Things, could not have.

I shall now conclude, with some use-
 ful Remarks and Reflections upon this
 Subject.

1. It may be proper briefly to observe,
 that there is here no Foundation for the
 Doctrine advanced by some Enthusiasts and
 Impostors, of the Duty or Necessity of be-
 lieving without, and against Evidence; or
 of believing Things unintelligible and in-
 comprehensible, and even contradictory
 and impossible. They are plainly two
 very different Things, to say, that we are
 to believe Facts and Propositions upon such
 a rational Evidence, as is sufficient, accord-
 ing to the Constitution of our Nature, to
 determine our assent to them, though it is
 not so clear and strong as the Evidence
 upon which we believe some other Facts
 and Propositions, which are the Objects of
 Sense, or capable of Demonstration; and
 to say, that we are to admit the Belief of
 Things,

Things, which have no Evidence in Reason at all to support them, of which we can have no Notions and Perceptions, or which we see to be repugnant to the clearest Perceptions and Dictates of our Understandings. The first is what our Saviour has required and commended in his Disciples, and is indeed the Result of a manly and becoming Use of our rational Powers: The other is a Thing which subverts Religion and exposes it to Contempt, which blinds the Guide, and extinguishes the Light of Life in us, which lays Mankind open to all Deceits, and involves them in a most dismal State of Darkness and Ignorance, Superstition and Corruption.

2. We may see that there is no Reason for charging Men with Weakness and Credulity, for believing the Resurrection, and other extraordinary Facts related to have been done by our Saviour, in the History of the Gospel. Though among the great Numbers who make Profession of the Gospel, it can hardly be doubted but that there are always many who believe these Facts implicitly, or upon no other Foundation than the Authority of their Instructors and Guides in Religion: yet to charge all, without Distinction, who admit the Truth of them, with Weakness and Prejudice,

SER. M. Enthusiasm, and implicit Faith, purely for
 VIII. their doing so, is utterly unjustifiable. For
 though the Evidence on which our Faith
 of these Facts depends, after a serious and
 rational Enquiry into the Truth of them,
 is not the highest kind of Evidence with
 which we are acquainted, which indeed in
 the Nature of Things it is impossible it
 should be, yet it is by no means precarious
 or insufficient, and perhaps never was, nor
 can, if fully and clearly proposed, be re-
 jected, or disregarded by any Man, with-
 out some Negligence, or Unfairness in the
 Conduct of his Understanding. It is there-
 fore unjust and presumptuous in the Ad-
 versaries of Christianity to represent the
 Friends and Professors of it, as universally
 labouring under Prepossession and Preju-
 dice, Credulity, and enthusiastick Notions,
 for admitting as Articles of their Faith, the
 Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, and the other
 miraculous Facts which attest the Truth
 and Divinity of his Religion; and to ar-
 rogate to themselves the Honour of being
 the Men of free Minds and strong Judge-
 ments, on Account of their Infidelity as to
 these Points. After all this insolent Con-
 tempt of their Neighbours, and vain Boast-
 ing of their own Acuteness, if Judgment
 were

were to be given between them and the
Persons, who, upon a fair Inquiry, believe
the Resurrection, and the other Miracles of
our Saviour, only as to the Point of good
Sense and Soundness of Understanding, by
any who are acquainted with the Nature
and Strength of Evidence, and the esta-
blished Grounds on which the human Mind
gives its Assent, and who at the same Time
pronounced Sentence uprightly, the Advan-
tage would certainly be declared to be on
the Side of Believers.

3. We may here see what Judgment or
Account is to be made of the Incredulity
of Men, as to the Resurrection and other
miraculous Works of our Saviour. The
Cause of it is not any want of a rational
Evidence to support these Facts: Our Lord
certainly was no Friend to an enthusiastick
or implicit Belief; he would never have
mentioned it as a commendable or praise-
worthy Thing in his Disciples, in all the
future Ages of the World, to believe his
Resurrection, (and the Case is much the
same as to his other Miracles) if he had
not known, as we find it in Fact to be
true, that those who have the Proofs of it
fairly laid before them would, upon an im-
partial and diligent Examination of them,

SERMON have a reasonable Foundation for their
 VIII. Faith. But however, the Unbelief of Men
 as to these Points, is not to be resolved into
 to a Failure or Defect in the Evidence
 which may be brought in Proof of them; it
 yet perhaps it would be judging rashly, to
 say that in every Case, even in Christian
 Countries, it proceeds from Dishonesty of
 Heart, and the Influence of evil Passions;
 Indeed with respect to the greatest Part of
 those who reject the Gospel, and treat the
 Miracles which give Credit to it with Scorn
 and Contempt, we have too much Reason
 to conclude from their Conduct in Life,
 which is as contradictory to the Principles
 of natural Religion, as to those of Christia-
 nity, that their Opposition to the Gospel
 flows from the worst Motives; and that
 though the Evidences of the Truth of it,
 were much stronger, yet they would still
 be the same Unbelievers that they are. But
 it is not improbable that in many Places
 where Christianity is professed, there may
 be several who reject it, because they never
 had an Opportunity of acquainting them-
 selves with the real Nature and Grounds of
 it. This indeed can but very rarely be the
 Case in any Countries of Freedom in which
 Christianity prevails, where the *Scriptures*
 lie

lie open to the Perusal of all Men; where SERM 2
every one, who is disposed to inform him- VIII
self as to the Nature and true Foundations V
of the Christian Religion, has it constantly
in his Power to do so; and where the very
Controversies which are almost always go-
ing on about the Truth of the Gospel, na-
turally call forth the Attention of Men to
it, and throw it in their Way, as a Subject
of their deliberate and serious Inquiry. But
as it is, perhaps, still possible, that some of
those who are Infidels or Scepticks with
respect to the extraordinary Facts which
establish the Truth and Divine Authority
of the Gospel, even among ourselves, may
be such, from the want of a just Informa-
tion, through some Unhappiness in their
Circumstances and Situation in the World;
it will be always most prudent and becom-
ing in us, to treat those of them, whom we
have any Reason to believe to be in this
State, with Candour and Gentleness, to ab-
stain from all reproachful Censures of them,
and harsh Judgments about their future
Condition; and if we find them disposed to
inquire fairly into the Reasons and Grounds
of Christianity, to encourage that Temper
in them, and to give them all the Assist-
ance that we can in their Inquiry. As it
seems

SERM. seems at the same Time to be plain, that
VIII. the Evidence for the Resurrection of our
 Saviour, and the other Miracles which support and confirm his Religion, must appear to be conclusive, to all who attend to it, and will be contented with such Grounds of Probability and Measures of Truth, as the Nature of the Case admits of; and as this Evidence must lie very open and obvious in a Country of Liberty, it highly concerns all among us, who profess to disbelieve, or to entertain strong Doubts of the Truth of these Facts, to consider whether their Incredulity, or Scepticism in regard to them, be really excusable? Whether it be the Effect of an invincible or involuntary Ignorance in them? Or, whether it does not proceed, if not from the more gross and palpable Vices, yet from a spiritual Pride and Vanity, or at least from an Indolence, Carelessness, and Inattention of Mind, which alone in a Matter of such Moment, as the receiving or rejecting of a Doctrine, which, to say the least, bids very fair to be from Heaven, must be greatly criminal, and of dangerous Consequence.

4. From what has been discoursed, we may learn how to return an Answer to a Difficulty which has been urged, indeed
 against

against several Articles of Religion, and particularly against the Resurrection of our Saviour, from the Evidence of it not being overbearing and irresistible. If, say the Adversaries of Christianity, *Christ* really rose from the Dead, and if, as is alledged, mighty Consequences depend upon his Resurrection, why was the Fact left in any Measure questionable, why were only a few of his own Disciples and Followers assured of the Truth of it, why was not the fullest Proof of it given to the whole Jewish Nation, and why is not the Evidence of it always so clear and strong, as immediately to command the Assent of all who inquire into it, or are concerned to believe it? Several Things might be said very properly in Answer to this Objection; but I shall make use only of one Consideration, to shew the Absurdity of it, which naturally arises from the present Subject, that the strong Degree of Evidence which the Objection requires for the Resurrection of our Saviour, would have destroyed all the Virtue or Merit of our believing it. The Apostles indeed had the highest Evidence of this Fact which they possibly could have, because this was necessary to render them credible Witnesses of it, or to

assign

lay

SERM.

VIII.

lay a just Foundation for our Belief of it, upon their Testimony: But for this very Reason, their Faith of the Fact was no way commendable or valuable in a moral Consideration. And if we had the same sensible Evidence of our Lord's Resurrection, which the Apostles had of it, our Belief of it must have been just of as little Worth in a moral Estimation as theirs was. If therefore room was to be left for the Exercise of Virtue in believing the Resurrection of our Saviour, if it was worthy of God to expect from us a diligent and impartial Use of our intelligent Powers in acquiring the Knowledge of such an important Truth, and to govern us in this, as well as in other Cases, according to the Nature which he has given us, it was by no Means fit that the Evidence of this Article of Christianity should have been so clear and strong, as to prevent our Consideration, and immediately to force our Assent. The End of the Divine Government seems plainly to require that the Principles of Religion should be attended with an Evidence sufficient to convince Persons of teachable, humble, unprejudiced, and honest Minds, but not so strong and irresistible as to extort Conviction from the Negligent,

ligent, Obstinate, and Insincere. Upon **SERM.**
this Foundation we may attain to a Belief **VIII.**
of these Principles, which may be very ef-
fectual for the good Government of our
Lives, while at the same Time we disco-
ver in the several Steps that we take for at-
taining to this Belief, a most amiable Sim-
plicity and Ingenuity, and improve our-
selves in Qualities which are of great Con-
sequence to the Dignity and Happiness of
our Nature.

5. From what has been said, we may
observe the Importance of cultivating al-
ways a sincere and impartial Love of Truth,
or an inquisitive, candid, and ingenuous
Disposition of Mind. This is the true Root
or Principle from which that Faith, which
can be considered as a moral Virtue and a
religious Duty, proceeds; and without it,
our assenting to all the Doctrines of Reli-
gion, is so far from being a commendable
or worthy Thing in us, that it is a Reproach
to our intelligent Nature, and most plainly
inconsistent with our Duty as Christians.
It concerns us therefore to cherish an ho-
nest, impartial, and teachable Temper, to
be always ready to inquire into important
Doctrines and Principles, to review the Rea-
sons of the Opinions which we hold, and
to

SERM. to yield to superior Evidence; to embrace
VIII. Christianity, not on the Foot of Prejudice
 and Education, but from a rational Persua-
 sion and clear Conviction of the Excellency
 and Truth of it. This is the only Way to
shew ourselves Men, and to do Honour to
 the Cause of Religion, to comply with the
 Intention of our Saviour, and to render our
 Faith of his Gospel a noble and effectual
 Principle of Virtue in us.

6. *Lastly*, Let our Belief of the Resur-
 rection of our Saviour have its proper Influ-
 ence upon our Hearts and Lives. Faith is
 intended to be a practical Principle, and
 unless it has a good Effect upon our Con-
 duct, it is dead, and cannot be thought to
 have any Virtue in it. Do we therefore
 believe upon rational Grounds that our Lord
 rose from the Dead? Let us shew the
 Truth and Force of our Faith, by receiv-
 ing and acknowledging our Saviour as a
 Divine Teacher and Lawgiver, by submit-
 ting to his Authority, and adorning the
 Doctrine which he has delivered to us, by
 a Conversation suitable to it; particularly
 let the Resurrection of our Lord be to us
 an Earnest and Pledge of a future State,
 and of our own Resurrection, in due Time,
 to a blessed Immortality; and in Conse-
 quence

quence of this, let the Consideration of it **SERMON**
 be the Means of mortifying our Hearts to **VIII**

this World, of inspiring us with noble and
 generous Designs, and exalting us to a most
 pure and heavenly Life. This is the Use

which St. Paul exhorts us to make of this
 Article of our Religion, with whose Words

I shall conclude: *If ye then, says he, be* Col. iii. 1;

risen with Christ, if ye profess to believe
 the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and

if, according to the Representation of your
 State in Baptism, ye have been *buried with* — ii. 12.

him, and have also risen with him, seek
 those Things which are above, where Christ

sitteth on the Right Hand of God: Set your — iii. 1—4.

Affection on Things above, not on Things on
 the Earth: For ye are dead, and your Life

is hid with Christ in God: And when Christ,
 who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye

also appear with him in Glory.

SER-

SERM. to yield to superior Evidence; to embrace

VII.

Christianity, not on the Foot of Prejudice and Education, but from a rational Persuasion and clear Conviction of the Excellency and Truth of it. This is the only Way to shew ourselves Men, and to do Honour to the Cause of Religion, to comply with the Intention of our Saviour, and to render our Faith of his Gospel a noble and effectual Principle of Virtue in us.

6. *Lastly*, Let our Belief of the Resurrection of our Saviour have its proper Influence upon our Hearts and Lives. Faith is intended to be a practical Principle, and unless it has a good Effect upon our Conduct, it is dead, and cannot be thought to have any Virtue in it. Do we therefore believe upon rational Grounds that our Lord rose from the Dead? Let us shew the Truth and Force of our Faith, by receiving and acknowledging our Saviour as a Divine Teacher and Lawgiver, by submitting to his Authority, and adorning the Doctrine which he has delivered to us, by a Conversation suitable to it; particularly let the Resurrection of our Lord be to us an Earnest and Pledge of a future State, and of our own Resurrection, in due Time, to a blessed Immortality; and in Consequence

quence of this, let the Consideration of it **SERM.**
be the Means of mortifying our Hearts to **VIII.**

this World, of inspiring us with noble and
generous Designs, and exalting us to a most
pure and heavenly Life. This is the Life
which St. Paul exhorts us to make of this
Article of our Religion, with whose Words

I shall conclude: *If ye then, says he, be* Col. iii. 1.

*risen with Christ, if ye profess to believe
the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and
if, according to the Representation of your
State in Baptism, ye have been buried with* —ii. 12.

*him, and have also risen with him, seek
those Things which are above, where Christ
sitteth on the Right Hand of God: Set your* —iii. 1-4.

*Affection on Things above, not on Things on
the Earth: For ye are dead, and your Life
is hid with Christ in God: And when Christ,
who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye
also appear with him in Glory.*

S E R -

SERMON IX.

The Use, and Abuse of the World.

I COR. VII. 31.

And they that use this World, as not abusing it; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.

SERM.
IX.

THE infinitely wise and good Author of our Beings, having thought fit to make us a Compound of Body and Spirit, has accommodated our State and Situation to the Nature which he has given us; having not only provided proper Objects to employ our spiritual Faculties and Affections, but allied us to a material World, which affords great Variety of Gratification and Entertainment to our external Senses, and likewise gives us noble Opportunities of cultivating our intellectual and moral Powers, and improving them to a great Degree of Perfection.

To

To separate ourselves, therefore, entirely from the Concerns and Enjoyments of this World, if it were possible, would yet be a most unwise and unjustifiable Attempt; as it would be a Fighting against the Law of our Creation, and affecting to live out of our Sphere and Rank. Our Business is to follow the Course of Life which the Constitution of our Beings points out to us; to provide for the Preservation of our Bodies, and secure to ourselves a competent Share of the Pleasures and Satisfaction arising from outward Objects, but still in a Subordination to the Improvement of the better Part of our Nature; so as that our external Enjoyments, instead of being Hinderances to our Progress in Virtue, which there is great Danger of their proving, may be Supports and Encouragements to us in Well-doing, and help to carry us forward to that sublime State of Perfection and Happiness, for which we are finally and ultimately intended. This may in general convince us of the Propriety of the Advice or Direction, which St. Paul gives us in the Text, to *use the World, as not abusing it*; where he plainly intimates, that it is not only lawful, but necessary, to attend to the Affairs of the World, and to make use of the Enjoyments

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SERMONS of Mr. J. H. yet so, as never to exceed in
 IX. our Desires and Affections, towards any
 worldly Gratifications and Advantages, or
 to abuse, or pervert them to any evil Pur-
 poses. In treating of this Subject, I shall,
First, explain more particularly this Advice
 of the Apostle, or shew what is the inno-
 cent and lawful Use, and what is to be ac-
 counted an Abuse, of the Enjoyments and
 Advantages of the World. *Secondly*, Con-
 sider the Argument, by which St. Paul in-
 forces his Advice, because *the Fashion of*
this World passeth away. *Thirdly*, Propose
 the Means of attaining to a right Temper
 with respect to our worldly Enjoyments
 and Interests. *Lastly*, Conclude with some
 Reflections upon the Whole.

I. I shall explain this Advice of the Apo-
 fle, or shew what is the innocent and law-
 ful Use, and what is to be accounted an
 Abuse, of the Enjoyments and Advantages
 of the World. Now in order to this, we
 must consider that God *having given the*
Earth to the Children of Men, and made
 all the Creatures, with which it is reple-
 nished, good and useful to us; and having
 likewise given us Appetites and Capacities
 to relish and enjoy the good Things of the
 World,

World, there are no worldly Pleasures and Advantages, which are absolutely, and in every Degree, unlawful. It would be most absurd to suppose, that the great Author of all Things had prepared external Objects for our Use, which yet were in no Case to be used by us, and had given us Desires and Inclinations towards these Objects, which were never to be gratified, in the Enjoyment of them. It is certain, that we may freely indulge our Desires and Affections towards outward Objects within the Bounds and Limits, which God, in Nature and Reason, has prescribed to us, in the Acquisition and Use of them. Within these Bounds, the Gratification of our Desires of them is always innocent, and in many Cases strictly our Duty. But if to obtain the Pleasures which external Objects are capable of affording, we transgress the Limits which the Author of Nature has set to us in the Exercise of our Affections towards them, we plainly abuse his Favour, and act very inconsistently with the Obligations of Gratitude and Duty which we always lie under to him. To know, therefore, what is the innocent and allowed Use of external Enjoyments and Advantages, and what is the Abuse of them, we must,

SERM. from the Consideration of our own Nature,

IX.

see how far we are intended for such Enjoyments, and in what Degree, we are required, or permitted, by the governing Faculty in our Frame, to acquire and pursue them.

And as to this, every one, even upon a slight Reflection upon himself, may perceive that besides his consisting of Body and Spirit, the two general constituent Parts of his Nature, he has a great Variety of particular Desires, Appetites, and Affections; some of which tend to the Enjoyment of those external good Things which please his bodily Senses, and are necessary for his Support and comfortable Subsistence in the World, and others of them to the procuring other Instances of his private Good; and again that another sort of them tend to the Happiness of Society, or of some other particular Persons; and that together with these Appetites and Affections, he has a Power of moral Discernment, or a Sense of Right, or Wrong, in certain Dispositions and Actions; and a Faculty of Reason, which enables him to search into the Natures and Dependencies of Things. He may likewise see that the Principle of moral Discernment in him, or his natural Conscience

science of Good and Evil, supported, and assisted by his Reason, discovering the real Natures and Consequences of Things, is the highest Faculty in his Constitution, which is to direct him in the Exercise of all his Desires, Passions, and Affections; which is to put these several Principles into Motion, and to continue, or limit their Operation towards their respective Objects, as it thinks fit. This natural Supremacy of Conscience, assisted by our Reason; or this Presidency of our Powers of Conscience and Reason together, over all the other Principles in our Nature, is necessarily to be taken into the Idea of these Faculties, without which no intelligible Account can be given of the Constitution of human Nature. The Dictates, therefore, of these superior Powers of our Nature, are the Law which the Author of our Beings has put us under, in obeying, or disobeying which, we, at the same Time, observe, or contradict, the Will of our Creator.

Now as these leading Faculties in our Constitution, direct us to the Improvement of ourselves in Virtue, as the highest and noblest Object upon which we can fix our Attention, as the Thing, which is both our Dignity and Happiness in this World, and

SERM. will be the certain Means of advancing us
 IX. to a State of the greatest Perfection and
 Felicity in the next; it is plain, that the
 general Limitation which we are laid under,
 in the Pursuit of outward Enjoyments and Advantages, is, that we are not to purchase any of them at the Expence of our Innocence and Integrity, or to obtain, or use them, in a manner inconsistent with Religion, and our Progress in moral Goodness. This general Boundary we must never transgress, in acquiring and using any of the good Things of this World; otherwise we shall plainly violate the Law of our Nature; and for the sake of some of the lower Purposes of Life, neglect the principal End of it; and for some trifling and transitory Pleasures and Honours, lose our Claim to substantial and everlasting Blessedness and Glory. Under this Limitation, however, there is still Scope enough given to us, to gratify our natural Desires and Affections towards the Enjoyments of the World; and to procure to ourselves, not only the outward good Things which are absolutely necessary for the Support of our Beings, but those of them likewise, which minister to the Pleasure and Comfort, and even to the Ornament, Elegance, and Grandeur

deur of Life. This I shall explain a little more particularly. SERM.
IX.

It cannot be doubted but that our Desires of the external Enjoyments necessary for the Support of Life, may be lawfully indulged by us. Our Existence in the World, being the Foundation of all the Good we are capable of in Life, as well as of our attaining to the higher Degrees of future Happiness, the Continuance of it is certainly to be taken Care of by us. The higher Principles in our Minds are so far from forbidding the Gratification of our Appetites of the Necessaries of Life, that they require and oblige us to gratify them, and will not permit us to be careless or indifferent about these Necessaries, but when we cannot have them, without acting inconsistently with the most important Business of Life, the holding fast our Integrity and Virtue; and would even allow us, if we happened to be reduced, not through any Idleness, Sloth, or Prodigality of our own, but through unavoidable Misfortunes, to a perishing Condition, to save ourselves from immediate Destruction, by Methods, which in common Cases would not be justifiable.

The Use, and Abuse of the World

2. It is evident, that we may very innocently indulge our Affections, not only towards the *Necessaries*, but likewise towards a certain Share of the *Pleasures, Conveniences, and Comforts of Life*. Human Life, with bare *Necessaries*, would be but a cold insipid Thing, and no way proportioned to those Capacities or Powers of Enjoyment, with which our Nature is furnished: We have Desires of a great Variety of Things, beyond what is absolutely wanted to support Life; we have Inclinations and Passions which prompt us to consult, not only our Being, but our Well-being, and our subsisting easily and agreeably in the World. It has, therefore, pleased the gracious Father of Mankind, to constitute the World so, as that every Person in good Health, with Industry and Application, may supply himself readily, not only with *Necessaries*, but with several *Pleasures, Satisfactions, and Accommodations*, which will render his State here very tolerable, and even comfortable to him. Indeed, as the Author of Nature is said to have poured out *Wisdom on all his Works*, so he may be said to have scattered Pleasure throughout the Universe, in such Manner that joyful Sensations necessarily flow in upon us, from innumerable

innumerable Objects, through every Inlet and Avenue to our Minds. But besides those natural and common Joys and Benefits, which unavoidably force themselves upon all perceptive and rational Beings in the World, there are several particular Satisfactions and Conveniencies, which every Man, by his own Care and Labour, may procure to himself. For Instance, every one of tolerable Health and Understanding, and living under the Protection of equal Laws, may provide to himself Food, that will be not only wholsome and nourishing, but agreeable and grateful to his Palate; he may have such Habitation and Cloathing, as will not only defend him against the Injuries of the Weather, but in some Degree please his Taste, or Fancy, in Houses, Furniture, and Dress; he may likewise contract Friendships, or enter into the conjugal State, and have a Family and Offspring, and by this Means obtain some of the most sincere and solid Pleasures which the present Life admits of; he may acquire the Knowledge of some ingenious and useful Art, which may yield him a great deal both of Entertainment and Profit; or he may engage in any of the several Ways of Commerce, in Proportion to his

Oppor-

SERM.

IX.

Opportunities and Abilities, and increase his Stock of Wealth, so as to have a reasonable Security against future Wants and Casualties, and be able, with Pleasure and Reputation, to discharge his Duty to his Country, his Family, and Friends, and all who have a Right to his Assistance. Now the moral and rational Powers of our Nature by no means prohibit this Improvement of our outward Condition, but on the contrary, require us to keep ourselves always in that easy and satisfied State, which is necessary to give us a lively Sense of the Bounty of our Creator, and to fill us with Gratitude and Love to him, and to make us more chearfully perform the Offices of Justice and Humanity which we owe either to Society, or to particular Persons. Nay, as many of the private Pleasures and Accommodations of Life, are directly publick Advantages and Benefits, it is plain, that we may with the fullest Approbation of our Minds, with the immediate Consciousness of a virtuous and honourable Intention, pursue and acquire them. And as for the other Pleasures and Conveniencies of the World, which either contribute remotely to the publick Good, or are perfectly consistent with it, we may,

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at least, with the Consciousness of Inno- SERM.
cence; acquire and enjoy them; provided IX.

still that our Desires of worldly Pleasure and Ease, however innocent in itself, never become so strong in our Hearts, as to diminish our Relish of nobler Enjoyments, and to soften our Spirits, and cool our Zeal in the Acquisition of those excellent Qualities, which are of the greatest Consequence, both to the lasting Peace of our Minds in this Life, and the supreme Dignity and Happiness of our Beings in the next.

3. But farther, as in the Exercise of our Affections towards external Objects, we are not limited to bare *Necessaries*, so neither are we to the *common Comforts and Conveniencies* of Life; but may, if we have Opportunity, acquire and use those outward Advantages, which are the Means of *adorn- ing* Life, of adding a *Polish and Beauty* to it, and shewing it in *Splendor and Magnificence*. As the Governor of the World, has made an Inequality in Men's outward Circumstances and Stations necessary for the Order and Happiness of Society, and as the most delicate and elegant Pleasures, the most manly and honourable Enjoyments of Life, result from the just Possession, and good Application of the higher Degrees of Riches

SERMON. Riches and Power, it is plain, that the honest Acquisition, and discreet Use of a great Fortune and a superior Station, are not only innocent, but highly laudable: It is certain, that Desires of these Advantages, upon a Perception of their Importance in Life, arise, in some measure, almost universally, in the Minds of Men, and, according to the Intention of Nature, are to be Spurs to a virtuous Activity, and the Foundation of a generous and heroick Conduct. It must be owned indeed, that there are but Few, who are capable of arriving, by justifiable and fair Means, at the first Degrees of Wealth and Authority, which the Constitution of Societies admits of; and there are, perhaps, still Fewer, who, if they were in such an Elevation, would be capable of improving the Advantages of their exalted Condition, in the Manner that is necessary to make them turn to their real Happiness and Glory: So that the Generality of Men are never to indulge their Affections towards a State of great Affluence, or Grandeur, which, if it were a Thing attainable by them, would be only the Means of exposing their Weakness, and involving them in Infamy and Ruin; but should restrain their Desires to that Fortune and Condition

of

of Life, which is best proportioned to the **SERM.**
Strength of their Minds, and which they **IX.**
may be able to use with Decency and Ho-
nour. But whoever are conscious of such
an Integrity and Greatness of Mind, as ren-
der them superior to the Temptations inci-
dent to a State of great Prosperity, and are
either born, or raise themselves, by their
own Industry and Merit, to the more emi-
nent Degrees of Wealth, Influence, and
Power, may certainly have the noblest Re-
lish of Life, and enjoy it in its greatest
Lustre and Dignity; as they may, not only
have all the Satisfaction and Comforts
which Persons of an inferior Rank enjoy,
but command almost every Object, that is
necessary for pleasing the most curious Taste,
and the most refined Imagination; and more
especially as they may abound in the Acts
of a magnificent Generosity, and the most
extensive Benevolence, encouraging Merit,
protecting oppressed Innocence, establishing
Right and Justice in the World, contribu-
ting greatly to the Welfare of whole Com-
munities, and diffusing Happiness of various
Kinds among great Numbers of Men; by
these Means, exalting themselves into a sort
of Divinities to the Rest of Mankind; or,
more truly, becoming the Instruments of Provi-

SER. M. Providence for promoting the most glorious
IX. Designs of God with respect to Men, and
 in Consequence of that, partaking, in some
 Degree, of the Glory and Happiness of
 God himself.

Thus we see what is the innocent and
 justifiable Use of the Enjoyments and Ad-
 vantages of the World: The Abuse of them
 may be easily known from what has been
 said. As the innocent and good Use of
 them consists in proportioning our Affecti-
 ons to the real Value of them; in acquiring
 them only by honest and fair Methods; in
 employing them, agreeably to the Design
 of the Author of Nature, for the Preserva-
 tion of our Beings, and Keeping ourselves
 in that contented and easy State, which
 makes us most capable of discharging the
 Duties which we owe to God, and our
 Neighbours; and in considering the higher
 Degrees of them, as the Means of abound-
 ing in the Acts of a more generous and
 sublime Virtue, and improving them ac-
 cordingly; the Abuse of them, on the con-
 trary, consists in desiring them with too
 great Vehemence of Affection, and esteem-
 ing them as the great, or principal Happi-
 ness of Life; in preferring them to the
 Pleasures of Virtue, and endeavouring to
 possess

persecute themselves of them by dishonest and wicked Means, in the Ways of Fraud, Injustice, Treachery, and Cruelty; and in applying the Share of Wealth and Power which we may have attained to, to the Purposes of Debauchery, Luxury, Voluptuousness, Avarice, Vanity, Insolence, Oppression, and Tyranny. This immoderate Love, and Misapplication of worldly Enjoyments and Advantages, is a flagrant Perversion and Abuse of them, and a most unworthy Return to the Goodness of God, in providing such Abundance of outward good Things, to be the Support and Delight of Mankind in this World, and likewise, by being rightly used, to contribute to the highest Improvement and Happiness of our Nature, in the whole Extent of our Existence. Our Appetites and Affections towards the Pleasures, Riches, Honours, and Dignities of Life, which are naturally very innocent and useful Dispositions, when exerted in this irregular Manner, degenerate into the greatest Vices, and become what St. John condemns, by the Names of *the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lusts of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; Things, utterly inconsistent with the prevalent Love of God and Religion, the Product of enormous Passions rebelling

SEEM² XIX

John ii.

16.

SERM. rebelling against the clear Dictates of Con-
 IX. science and Reason, and Sources of innumerable Evils both to ourselves and others.

II. I proceed to consider the Argument by which *St. Paul* inforces his Advice, of *using the World, so as not to abuse it*; because *the Fashion of this World passeth away*. There are indeed several Considerations of great Weight, to restrain us from an undue Love of the Enjoyments and Advantages of the World; such, as its Repugnancy to the Spirit of true Religion, its Tendency to corrupt and debase our Minds, to stifle and suppress every generous and manly Principle in us, and to fill us only with low and groveling, or with unsociable and mischievous Passions; and the Misery which it must bring upon ourselves both in this, and a future State: These are Arguments, which cannot but have great Force for moderating the Affections of Men towards this World, if they give themselves leave to reflect, and have any Remains of Goodness or Generosity of Spirit, or even any rational Concern for their own Welfare in them. But perhaps nothing sets the Madness of an immoderate Love and Pursuit of worldly Enjoyments in a more universally striking

striking Light, than St. Paul's Consideration SER.M.
in the Text, that *the Fashion of this World* IX.
passeth away. The World is only a tran-

sient and short Scene, which will quickly
be over. *For what is our Life,* the Foun-
dation of all earthly Pleasures and Enjoy-
ments, *but a Vapour, which appeareth for a* Jam. iv.
little Time, and then vanisheth away? What ¹⁴⁻
daily Instances have we of its Frailty and
Uncertainty? How many sensible Proofs
are ever occurring to us, that *Man, in his* Ps. xxxix.
best Estate, is altogether Vanity, liable to be ⁵⁻
cut down by a thousand Accidents? Or,
suppose the Life of a Man protracted to the
longest Period, to which, according to the
Course of Nature, it can be drawn out;
yet, how small a Number of Years com-
prehends the Term of its Duration? And
for how considerable a Part of these, may
he possibly be dead to this World, having
lost all Taste and Relish of its Enjoyments?
So that unless he has some Fund of inward
Satisfaction, he may, with the greatest Af-
fluence of outward Advantages, be abso-
lutely miserable. Or, should all his Powers
and Senses be supposed to continue vigorous
and acute to the last, yet how easily may
all external Materials and Means of gratify-
ing and pleasing them, be removed? For
T the

SERMON the Possessions of this World are no less
 IX. mutable and uncertain, than the Proprietors of them are. Though Diligence and Prudence in the Conduct of our Affairs, are indeed usually the Means both of obtaining and securing a Fortune, yet, in how many Instances are Men disappointed, after using their greatest Industry and Skill in the Pursuit of Wealth, and they find it impracticable to attain to the Degrees of it which they have aimed at? And how frequently are Riches lost, after they have been acquired? *A Moth, or Rust corrupts them; or Thieves break through and steal them; or, they make themselves Wings, according to the Observation of Solomon, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven; that is, they moulder and consume in a manner hardly to be accounted for. How slippery is the Foundation, upon which great Power stands? How many Engines are almost continually at work, to undermine the Man, who is in Possession of it; and how difficult is it for him to guard against all the open Attempts, and secret Artifices of his Enemies? Even the most wise and generous Use of Power, whatever it ought to be, is well known to be no Protection to a Man, or Security for continuing him*

Matt. vi.
29.

Prov. xxiii.
5.

in the Enjoyment of it; and though Indirect Arts may sometimes prop up a Man in Power, longer, perhaps, than the most prudent and upright Conduct would have supported him, yet these almost always fail at last, and the Man is forced to descend, perhaps, a great deal below the Persons whom he has formerly insulted and oppressed. So transitory and fleeting a Thing, in every View of it, this World is! This, I know, is a common Topick, upon which, almost every one is ready to declaim: But it is far from being considered by Men, with such Attention and Seriousness, as it deserves. If it were, it could not, certainly, but have a great Influence for cooling our Hearts, and slackening our Pace in the Prosecution of our worldly Interests and Advantages, and prevent our exceeding the Bounds of Nature, both in the Acquisition and Use of them. For who that has always a deep and lively Conviction of the Vanity and Mutability of all earthly Things, will think it worth his while, to be immoderately careful about them, or allow himself in any unjustifiable Measures to obtain them? Who that seriously reflects that *this World passeth away and the Lust thereof,* ^{1 Joh. ii.} *but that he who doeth the Will of God abideth* ^{17.}

SERM. for ever; who, I say, that considers this,

IX.

and conducts himself according to any

Rules of Wisdom and Prudence, will not chuse to use the World with great Moderation; to receive and enjoy with Thankfulness and Sobriety, the outward Blessings which kind Providence bestows on him, for his necessary Support and Comfort thro' the various and dangerous Stages of Life; and to seek the higher Degrees of external Advantages, not so much for the Purposes of his private Gratification, as to be the Instruments of his doing greater Good, and exerting more effectually his humane and benevolent Dispositions? Who that habitually recollects how precarious and shifting a Scene this World is, and that it must soon give place to another and an infinitely more important State, and governs himself in any measure, either by the Dictates of Reason, or by a Regard to his own Interest; who, with this Sense of Things, and this Disposition of Mind, will *not possess the World, as if he possessed it not*, and be so far from engaging too deeply with it, and from making it his only, or principal Business, to live in a constant Round of Pleasures, and to arrive at a still greater Height of Pomp and Splendor, that he will be

gradually removing his Affections from SERM.
all the fading and temporary Enjoyments IX.
which he has in his Power, and be in-
finitely less solicitous in adding to his Stock
of them, than in turning the Share of them
which he has to a good Account, and im-
proving himself, in the Use of them, in
those excellent and divine Qualities, which,
when the present Scene is closing, and the
World is for ever vanishing from his Eyes,
will yield him the most solid Comfort and
purest Delight, and be the Foundation of
his perfect and compleat Happiness in the
eternal Kingdom of God?

III. The *Third* Thing which I under-
took, was to propose the Means of attain-
ing to a right Temper with respect to our
worldly Enjoyments and Interests. And
as an undue Affection and wrong Turn of
Mind towards these Objects, arises chiefly
from the absurd and fantastick Notions
which we have of their Worth, and from
the constant Influence of them upon our
external Senses; it is necessary for remedy-
ing this Evil, and forming in us a just and
becoming Disposition towards the Things
of Life, to correct our false and vain No-
tions of the Value of these Things, and to
acquire

SERMON. acquire true Opinions of the real Worth of

IX.

them; and to withdraw our Minds frequently from this present sensible Scene, and to fix them seriously and habitually on that future invisible State, which is of infinite and eternal Consequence to us.

I. Let us correct our vain Notions of the Enjoyments of Life, and fix in our Minds rational Opinions of their real Value and Importance. It is plain that Mankind run very generally into great Absurdity and Confusion, in their Imaginations about external Advantages; that they connect in their Minds Ideas of superior Enjoyment, Dignity, and Excellence, with the Possession of the higher Degrees of these Advantages; nay, that many look upon a large Share of them, as almost the only Thing deserving their Attention and Regard, as being absolutely necessary to a happy and honourable Life, and the certain Means of arriving at it. From hence proceeds their violent Attachment to the World, and their incessant hurrying after the greatest Degrees of Riches and Power which they can attain to; and to possess themselves of these, their seldom stopping at any Practices, that conduce to their End, however unjust and dishonourable; and their acting a Part in the Use
of

of them, quite below the Dignity of their Nature, and contrary to the Laws of it, for which every Man, who has a true and impartial Sense of Things, must greatly pity, or despise them, and which their own Consciences would certainly condemn, if they viewed their Actions in a true Light, and not through that dazzling Glare which their irregular and deluding Imaginations throw upon them. In order therefore, to the acquiring and cultivating a reasonable Temper with regard to the World, it is necessary to bring our extravagant Fancies of the Value of its Goods, under Examination; to inquire whether the Associations which we may have formed of Ideas of high Enjoyment, and extraordinary Merit, with a Property in the superior Degrees of external Goods be well founded; to consider the Intention of the Author of Nature in supplying us with outward good Things, and to settle true Notions of the Use, End, and Worth of them in our Minds. If we set ourselves in earnest to do this, we shall soon come to see Things in a very different Light from that in which a vain and giddy Imagination may have presented them to us, and be convinced that neither the *Happiness* nor *Dignity of human Life* consisteth

SERM. in the *Abundance of the Things which a*

IX.

Man possesseth. We shall see that the Things absolutely necessary for our Support, are but few, and soon provided; that the common Comforts and Conveniencies which we want in the World, are likewise readily obtained; and that after this, additional Advantages, so far as private Enjoyment depends upon them, may be easily spared. We shall find that Health, Content, and Cheerfulness, which are among the most substantial Blessings of Life, are as commonly the Portion of Men in a mean Fortune, as they are of the Wealthy and Great; and that the most solid Merit, consisting in pious and virtuous Affections, and the regular Exercise of these in Proportion to a Man's Abilities, together with the noble and divine Pleasures which result from thence, do not at all depend upon any outward Circumstances, but are in the Power of every Mortal, of the lowest and poorest, as well as of the highest and most potent, and that in Fact they are usually found in greater Degrees in Persons of an inferior or middle Station, than in those of the most affluent Fortune, and most exalted Condition. We shall perceive, that though Riches, Rank, and Power, are indeed Talents

lents and Advantages which may be laid out SERM.
to the most valuable Purposes, not only to IX.

the Increase of a Man's private Satisfaction, but to the adorning of his Life, and the highest Exaltation of his Character, yet they are not of so much Consequence, that a Man, conscious of his Integrity, need think himself either unhappy or contemptible for the Want of them; that it is not the bare Possession, but the discreet and generous Use of outward Advantages, which is the Source of any extraordinary Pleasure or Honour to a Man; and that the Disposition to make a good Use of them, may be as strong in the Persons who do not, as it is in those who possess them, and when it is so, that it may be the Foundation of as much inward Pleasure to them, and procure them as much Esteem from all who know them, as those have, whose Circumstances enable them more effectually to exert it. These Sentiments will probably be the Result of a cool and deliberate Inquiry concerning the real Use and Value of the Enjoyments and Advantages of this World: And by impressing these Notions deeply upon our Minds, we shall guard against those Phantoms and Delusions, which are so apt to bewilder and confound us in the Prosecution

SERM. *secution of our worldly Interests, and be*
 IX. *prepared to exercise our Affections towards*
 them in a due Order and Proportion; being
 left at Liberty to acquire, and enjoy freely
 whatever is really necessary for our Support
 and Comfort in Life, and to possess our-
 selves likewise, if we can do it by just and
 honourable Means, even of the highest
 Degrees of outward Advantages, and to
 lay them out, when we have obtained them,
 for procuring to ourselves any innocent Gra-
 tifications, and more especially the most
 noble and sublime Pleasures of Humanity
 and good Offices; while yet we shall not
 be pushed on by any enthusiastick Opinions
 of the Worth of external Objects, to desire
 them too earnestly, or to prefer the Pos-
 session of them to the Consciousness of
 Virtue. And if we will resolutely act upon
 this Scheme, we shall in Time acquire such
 a confirmed Temper of Moderation, with
 respect to the World, as will prevent our
 abusing it, or our breaking through, for the
 Sake of its Advantages, any Obligations
 which we are under, as Christians, and ra-
 tional and moral Agents.

2. For forming a right Temper in us to-
 wards the World, let us always cultivate a
 lively and vigorous Sense of a future State,

One

One great Reason of our immoderate Love S E R M.
of the World, is the constant Operation of IX.

its Objects upon our outward Senses, and the deep and lasting Impressions which these make upon our Minds; from whence such strong Desires and Inclinations towards them arise in us, as are apt, without leaving Time for Reflection, to hurry us into very unjustifiable Measures, both in obtaining and enjoying them. Now the most effectual Way of guarding against this dangerous Influence of external Objects, and giving our Minds a good Ply with respect to the World, is to retire frequently in our Thoughts from this sensible transitory Scene, and to settle in our Minds an habitual lively Sense of that future everlasting State, the Enjoyments of which are of infinitely greater Moment to us, than any that we can here obtain. Whoever has always a firm Belief, and vigorous Hope of the Happiness of a future Life, will certainly be in no great Danger of desiring any of the Enjoyments of this World inordinately, or abusing them in any respect. A Mind constantly actuated by these Principles, though it will remit nothing of a reasonable Care and Industry about the Concerns of this Life, yet must be so fully satisfied of the Insignificancy of them

SER. M. them all, when compared with the sublime

IX. Glories, and the substantial and permanent

Joys of Futurity, that it will have an absolute Contempt of them, whenever they come in Competition with these, and will still be disposed to use *Things temporal*, so as more effectually to secure those that are *eternal*. The Difficulty indeed is to keep our Faith and Hope of a future Existence always in a due Degree of Force and Vigour. For though the Evidences which we have of it, are so very obvious and full, as to be capable of convincing every fair and just Enquirer of its Reality, yet as it is a remote Object, and as the Exercises and Enjoyments of it will be in a great measure new, and different in many Circumstances, from any that we have had Experience of in this World, the greatest Part of Men, however they may profess to believe it, are really but little attentive to it, and form such faint and languid Notions of it, as almost always disappear in the Hurry of their common Affairs, and hardly at any Time have any considerable Effect upon their Minds. It is, therefore, very necessary to inquire seriously and deliberately into the Evidences of a future Life, and frequently to revive, and go over in our Minds;
all

all those Considerations which persuade us of its Certainty, and to dwell with Pleasure on the Contemplation of the Felicity provided for good Men in it, which we must conclude, according to all our Notions of the Divine Administration, will infinitely exceed, both in Quality and Duration, all the Happiness that we were ever acquainted with upon Earth, though the Nature of it at present is not to be fully understood by us. And if by calm Inquiry, and serious Meditation, we confirm ourselves in the Belief of another Life, raise our Apprehensions of the Happiness to be enjoyed in it, and render the Expectation of it familiar and habitual to our Minds, it is hardly possible that we should be overcome by the Temptations of the World, but shall be able to converse freely in it, and to attend to all the Affairs of it, and yet to keep ourselves unspotted from it; and be so far from sacrificing our Integrity, and our Hopes of Immortality, to our Desires of the mean and precarious Advantages of Life, that we shall be above all things solicitous to make our worldly Interests and Possessions, the Means of our abounding in the Acts of Goodness here, and our obtaining a larger Share of the Rewards of it hereafter.

SER. M. I shall conclude with a Reflection or
 IXI two, upon what has been discoursed.

1. We may here see the Mistake of those Persons, who imagine that a Renunciation of the World, and stripping themselves of the common Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, is included in that Contempt of the World, which is the Duty of Christians, or a necessary Ingredient in a perfectly religious Character. That Notions of this Kind have prevailed, making Multitudes of Men to retire from the World, not for a short Time, for the sake of Recollection and Improvement, (which is a Thing of great Use, and that should be frequently practised by all of us) but entirely and absolutely, and to spend their whole Lives in a Way, not only useless, but burthenfome to Society, as well as uneasy and grievous to themselves, is a Matter extremely well known. The utter Absurdity of these Notions must be as apparent to all Men of any Reflection: For what can be more foolish than to suppose that the Author of our Beings could ever intend that we should pursue a Course of Life quite unnatural to us, contrary both to the Dictates of the governing Faculties in our Constitution, and to every Instinct and Propension implanted

in

in our Hearts? What more vain than to SEEM think that the wise and good Governor of IX! the World will be pleased with our deserting our Post, and flying from the Duty which he has imposed on us, of contributing by our Industry and Activity, both to the Order and Welfare of the Publick, and to the Encrease of our private Happiness? Certainly all Notions of the peculiar Excellence and Merit of such a Conduct, have no Foundation either in Reason, or Religion, and can proceed from nothing but a most disagreeable Sullenness and Gloominess of Temper, or some extravagant and violent Enthusiasm. Indeed the Withdrawing from Society, and Throwing up the necessary Business, and innocent Enjoyments of Life, is so far from being an Argument of any Generosity or Greatness of Mind in us, or of the Eminence of our Virtue and religious Dispositions, that it is a clear Proof of just the Reverse, of a weak and feeble Mind, unable to discern, or to pursue the just Measures of Life; and of our being under the Influence of Passions, which are both unbecoming the Dignity of the reasonable Nature, and inconsistent with the Principles of true Religion. The true Way to discover our Magnanimity, and Superiority

SERM. rity to the Temptations of the World, and

IX. the Force which the Principles of Religion have upon us, is, not to run out of the World, but to act the Part assigned to us in it, becomingly; to exercise our Affections, in a just Order, towards the several Objects which are by Nature suited and adapted to them, still keeping them subject to the calm Directions of the ruling Principle in our Minds, and preventing all the Exorbitancies and Excesses of them. This will indeed be to triumph over the World, and to shew that we are animated with the most noble and generous Sentiments and Dispositions, and arrived at as great Perfection in Virtue, as the present Condition of our Nature will admit of.

2. We may, from what has been said, see the much more general Error of Mankind, in suffering a worldly Spirit to grow in them, and in pursuing and using so irregularly, as they commonly do, the Enjoyments and Advantages of this present Life. The World has been always the great Enemy of Men, which has drawn them

1 Tim. vi. *into Temptations and Snares, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown them in Destruction and Perdition.* It would be hard to fix upon any Period, in which the Love

9.

Love of this World, has not had a more SERM.
universal Influence upon Mankind, than the IX.

Love of God and Religion; and it is too plain that the Attachments of Men to their temporal Interests are not at present lessening. Perhaps, on the contrary, there are now greater Numbers than have been formerly known, who openly profess their having a Regard for Nothing, but what they take to be their Interest in this Life; who, according to the Philosophy of the worst Sort of Infidels and Scepticks of old, deride the Notions of *moral Good and Evil*, of a *Right and a Wrong* in Life, and think that *we were born at all Adventures, and that Hereafter we shall be, as though we had never been*; who are, therefore, for enjoying Wisdom the good Things that are present; for taking ii. 2, 6, 9, 10, 11. their Share of Voluptuousness, and leaving Tokens of their Jollity in every Place; who oppress the poor righteous Man, who spare not the Widow, nor reverence the grey Hairs of the Aged; who make their Strength the Law of Justice, and account that which is feeble to be nothing worth. And as to those who are not tainted with such bad Principles, who are ready to acknowledge the Obligations of Virtue, and profess to believe the general Doctrines of Religion, how mi-

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serably

SERM. serably do a great Part of them fully, and

IX. contradict their Profession, by an earthly, sensual, and vain Conversation; by bending their whole Thoughts and Endeavours to the Acquisition of Wealth, and attaining to Stations of Power and Honour, and shewing but very little Goodness and Humanity, and frequently but little Decency in the Use of these Advantages? The Inconsistency of this Conduct with the Obligations of moral Agents, with the Design of the Religion of *Christ*, and the Hopes and Expectations which he has raised his Followers to, must be sufficiently obvious to every unprejudiced thinking Man. And however

Psal. xlix.
6.

the *Children of this World*, may at present *boast themselves in the Multitude of their Riches*, and imagine that they are the only prudent and happy Men, contemning all who do not go into their Measures, as Persons void of Sense, or Spirit; yet they too shall come to have another Sense of Things, and be effectually convinced of the Unworthiness and Madness of their Pursuits, when the righteous Judge of the World calls Mankind to an Account for their Conduct, and reckons with them for the Improvement of their Talents: Then, most certainly, all *the Wisdom of this World*
will

will be found to be but Foolishness; and they SERM.
alone will appear to be the excellent, wise, IX.
and happy Persons, who having always
moderated and exercised their Affections
towards earthly Things by the Dictates of
Conscience and Religion, and faithfully ap-
plied all their natural Powers, and all the
Interests and Advantages which they had
in the World, to the Ends for which they
were intrusted with them during this tem-
porary Scene, shall, at the Conclusion of it,
be thought worthy of *being received into* Luke xvi,
everlasting Habitations. 9:

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S E R M O N X.

The destructive Tendency of a Life
of licentious Pleasure.

1 TIM. V. 6

*But she that liveth in Pleasure, is dead
while she liveth.*

SERM.
X.

WHAT the Apostle here affirms of one Sex, is equally true of both; that when they run into a Course of licentious Pleasure, and mind nothing but the indulging themselves, in Debauchery, Luxury, and Vanity, they are dead to all the great Purposes of a rational and virtuous Life. Though they are naturally alive, yet in a spiritual and moral Sense, they are dead: They retain indeed the outward Appearance of Men, and breathe, and move, and enjoy as sensitive Creatures; but the higher Powers, and more amiable Affections, which distinguish our Species from the

the inferior Parts of the Creation, are ex-SERM.
tinct in them; they are quite insensible of X.
the true Dignity of human Nature, and of
the Ends for which reasonable and moral
Powers have been given to them, and as
little careful to acquit themselves like Men
and Christians, as if they did not exist at
all.

This will certainly appear to be a strange
Assertion to the Persons themselves, who
have got a strong Taste for what is com-
monly called a Life of Gaiety and Pleasure,
who are apt to imagine that they of all Men
take the justest Estimate of Life, and cal-
culate the Measures of it most accurately;
insomuch that they despise all, who set up
upon a Scheme different from their own,
as “dull Souls, insipid wretched Mortals,
“void both of Understanding and Spirit,
“who are cramped and enslaved by precise
“superstitious Notions, and influenced by
“the meanest Passions, and who instead
“of using and enjoying Life, only drag
“through, and endure it.”

It will, therefore, be necessary, both for
undeceiving these Persons, if it be possible,
and securing ourselves from their pernicious
Error, to enquire into the Grounds of St.
Paul's Assertion, or to consider how an

SERM. immoderate Pursuit of Pleasure destroys the

X. Mind, and all the nobler Affections belonging to our Nature, and is inconsistent both with the principal Business, and true Happiness of human Life. This I shall first do, and then proceed to some useful Observations and Reflections which will arise upon this Subject.

For discerning the Reasons of St. Paul's Assertion, we must consider that the human Mind being the Subject of various Powers, some of which are naturally designed for directing and governing the Rest, the Life, and Strength, the Perfection, Harmony, and Happiness of it, result from its exerting its Faculties according to the Order of Nature; from the steady Superintendency and Government of its higher Powers, over all the inferior Principles and Movements in it, and the Subjection of These to the Judgment and Determination of its leading Faculties: Just as the Soundness and Strength of any complex Constitution consist in the exact Adjustment and due Proportion of its several Parts, the Dependence of some upon others, and the Subordination of all the lower Principles, to that which is chief and supreme in the whole System. Whoever attends to his several inward Powers

Powers and Principles, and the Rank and SERM.
X.
Importance of them in the human Consti-
tution, must immediately be sensible that

his Conscience and Reason are advanced to the Seat of Judgment and Authority, while his Appetites, Passions, and Affections, are put in a State of Subjection to these governing Faculties. Every Man who finds in himself a Power of moral Discernment, or a Sense of Good and Evil, in his Affections and Actions, and a Faculty of Reason enabling him to discover the Natures and Tendencies of Things, must as easily see, that they were designed to govern all the other Principles in his Mind, and to guide and direct his Life, as that his Eyes were intended for seeing, and his Feet for walking, or that any other of his external Senses or Members were made to serve the Uses and Purposes, to which they are most evidently fitted and adapted. Now the Conduct to which these superior Powers in our Constitution lead and direct us, is briefly this:

First, With respect to God; (whose Existence and Attributes we know from the Consideration of his Works) that we worship him with the most profound Veneration, the sincerest Love and Gratitude, the

SERM. most firm Affiance and Trust, and the most

X. humble Submission and Resignation; and

that we express our inward Sentiments and Dispositions towards him in all proper outward Acts, of Prayer and Praise, and Endeavours to imitate his Nature, and comply with his Will. Again, with respect to Mankind; that we abstain from all Injuries, and treat every Man according to the strict Rules of Righteousness and Equity, and the Dictates of Compassion and Humanity; that we be true to the Interests of Society, and not only promote the Happiness of Those, who immediately depend upon us, and are nearly related to us, but steadily pursue the most universal absolute Good in our Power. And lastly, with regard to ourselves; that we carefully cultivate our Minds, and enrich them with Wisdom and Virtue; that we endeavour after the highest Degrees of the Love of God and of Mankind, as being the Foundation both of our greatest Perfection, and truest Happiness; and that we desire and use all external Benefits and Advantages always with a reference to this inward Improvement, and so as to make them subservient to our Progress in true Goodness. This is the Conduct to which our moral
and

and rational Powers, so long as our Minds SERM.
are not disordered or corrupted, always di- X.
rect us, and which we cannot neglect to
pursue, without subverting the Order of
Nature, and introducing Dissonancy and
Confusion into the System of our inward
Principles and Affections. This is like-
wise the Course of Life which Religion in-
tends to engage us in; for as it sets out,
and proceeds upon the Plan of Nature,
the great Design of it, is to reinforce and
strengthen all our natural Obligations, and
to inculcate upon us, by the most effectual
Motives, those very Things, which the
higher Faculties and Principles in our Minds
approve and recommend to us. Whoever,
therefore, cultivates this Temper in him-
self, and pursues this Conduct, is plainly
exercising his Powers in the best Order,
and greatest Perfection; he is leading the
Life of a Man, and of a Christian, and is
possessed of the truest Dignity, Honour,
and Felicity, of which human Nature is at
present capable.

I have given this short and general Ac-
count of the natural State and Order of the
human Mind, and of the Things which
constitute our Perfection and Happiness, as
reasonable and moral Beings, and Persons
acting

SERMON. acting under the Influence of Religion, that
 X. we may the better see the Inconsistency of
 a Course of licentious Pleasure, with a
 sound and vigorous State of Mind, and
 with our principal Business, and truest Happi-
 nesses, as Men and Christians.

Indeed there is no enormous Passion, which does not break the natural Tone and Order of the Mind, and which, if indulged and cherished, does not in time as effectually ruin it, as the immoderate Pursuit of Pleasure does. The wild Ambition of Men, their extravagant Pride, insatiable Covetousness, and unrelenting Hatred and Malice, are as contrary to the Constitution of our Nature, usurp as much upon the higher Principles of the Mind, and make as great Havock of the more noble Dispositions of it, as the grossest Debauchery and greatest Libertinism, which Men usually run into, do. The Scriptures, therefore, represent not only one Species of Vice, but Vice in general, as destructive of the Freedom, Life, and Happiness of the Soul; speaking of Sinners of all Sorts, *as dead in Trespasses and Sins, as sold under Sin, as the Servants of Sin, as groaning under the Body of Death, and as held in Captivity to the Law of Sin and Death.* But nothing, it

it is certain, brings greater Desolation into **SERM.**
the Mind, and more entirely extinguishes **X.**

all the Principles of a spiritual and divine Life in us, than a Habit of gross Debauchery, and a Course of unbounded lawless Pleasure. The first Steps that a Man takes in this Course, shock the whole Frame of his Mind, and farther Advances quite destroy the Tenor of it, and throw it into a State of great Depravation, and the most miserable Confusion and Distraction, presenting us with the Absurdity and Grievance, which *Solomon* complains of, in a higher Sense indeed than he intended, of *Servants riding upon Horses, and Princes* **Ecclef. x.** *walking like Servants on the Earth; I mean* ^{17.} the higher Powers of the Soul degraded, its amiable Affections perverted, or suppressed, and its lowest Appetites assuming the Prerogative of being the Guides of Life, and grown strong enough to check and controul its superior Faculties, and carrying Men to the most unbecoming and fatal Conduct, and rendering the Attainment of those Virtues, which are the Glory and Happiness of their Nature, altogether impracticable to them. For how is it possible that the Love of God, and those other sublime Affections, which we are to exercise

SERMON. cise towards that most excellent and adorable Being, can have any place in a Soul under the Power of the lowest sensual Desires, and an unrestrained Love of vain fantastick Gratifications. As soon may *Light and Darknes* agree, or, *a Fountain send forth at the same Place, sweet Water and bitter*, as Dispositions of so contrary a Nature be found in the same Subject. And as to the Offices which we owe to Society; how can that Man be capable of discharging them with any Punctuality, whose ruling Passions all terminate in himself, who looks no farther than the pleasing his own Appetite and Fancy? Or, if at any Time he should be disposed to serve the Publick, or his Friends, how easily may he be stopped, and diverted from an Employment which is not at all suited to his Taste, and in which he could have but very little Satisfaction? Besides that his luxurious and vain Life may easily reduce him to such Circumstances, however opulent and plentiful his Fortune in the World may be, as will force him to neglect the Acts, not only of Generosity and Benevolence, but even of common Justice and fair Dealing. And lastly, as to the Cultivation of the Mind, or the Improvement of it in those Qualities

which

2 Cor. vi.
14.

Jam. iii.
11.

which are the Foundation of our Perfection and Happiness ; it is plain that nothing can be a greater Hindrance to this, or rather a more certain and necessary Cause of the contrary, than a voluptuous and dissolute Course of Life : For it suppresses or stifles all those very Faculties and Affections of our Minds, whereby alone we are capable of any real Merit or Excellence, and in the due Regulation and Exercise of which our true Felicity consists ; and exalts those Appetites and Passions in us, which, in their best State, are the Marks of our Frailty and Infirmary, and which, in that unruly Condition, into which this Course of Life puts them, are our great Ignominy and Reproach, and a Source of infinite Harm and Misery to us ; as they sink us below our Rank in the Creation, damp every Thing that is generous or great in our Nature, fill us with the meanest Notions and Views, and hold us in the most abject Slavery ; and as they deprive us of the most noble and durable Pleasures of Virtue, and instead thereof, give us only false and deceitful Joys, which continue but for a Moment ; which are for the most part accompanied with many great Inconveniencies at present, the Loss of Health, Fortune, and Character ;

Sloth,

SERM. Sloth, Indolence, and an Incapacity for all
 X. Affairs of any Consequence in Life; and
 which must certainly at last issue in utter
 Confusion and Shame, and the most grievous Remorse and Anguish.

There are indeed Degrees in this Degeneracy and Corruption of the Mind, which a licentious Course produces: The Beginnings of it, for the most part, communicate only a small Infection to the Soul, and such as might be easily cured by Watchfulness and Care; but when Men are at no Pains to restrain their Desires, and to make a timely Retreat, but run on headlong in their libertine and extravagant Course, their Conduct must as certainly be attended with the Oppression and Lethargy of their intellectual and moral Powers, the Extinction of their more noble Affections, the Loss of every worthy and manly Sentiment, and the most wretched Lowness and Baseness of Mind, as any malignant incurable Disposition in the Blood, must be followed with the Weakness and Pain, with the languishing and Death of the Body. Our Saviour has given us a very lively Representation of the fatal Tendency of a Life of immoderate Pleasure to destroy and kill the Soul, in his Parable of the *Prodigal*, who
 by

by abandoning himself to Riot, and all S.E.R.M.
Kinds of Debauchery, soon lost both the X.

Understanding and Heart of a Man, and brought himself into the most contemptible and miserable State, in which human Nature could possibly be; and our Lord afterwards speaking of his Recovery from this most deplorable Condition, described it under the Notion of a spiritual Resurrection;

He was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and Luke xv. 24.
is found. Nor is this Notion peculiar to

the sacred Writings: The old *Philosophers* frequently speak of Habits of Sensuality and Voluptuousness, as the Diseases and Death of the Soul; as Things which enervate, impair, and enslave its Powers; and which, if not corrected and removed, must at long-run, render it quite impotent to all virtuous Exercises, and incapable of all rational and manly Enjoyments.

The Observations and Reflections which occur upon this Subject, are these following.

1. That it must not be inferred from any Thing that has been said, that all our Desires of Pleasure are absolutely criminal and unlawful, or that it is any part of our Duty, as Men and Christians, to lead a Life of rigid Abstemiousness, and of harsh and painful

SER. M. painful Mortification. There are Extremes

X. in almost every Thing, and it is the Unhappiness of Mankind, from a Sense of the Mischiefs and Inconveniencies of some one, to run precipitately and blindly into another, attended, perhaps, with as great Evils, as those they designed to avoid. It is plain, that many Persons, whose natural Temper is probably dark and severe, observing the terrible Destruction, which a Course of irregular and extravagant Pleasure brings upon the Virtue and Happiness of Men, have grown fond of a quite opposite sort of Life, and so have thrown up the most innocent Enjoyments of the World, and gone into a State of voluntary Poverty, and submitted to cruel Pennances and Fastings, and all Kinds of bodily Rigours and Austerities; imagining this to be the most acceptable Way of serving God, and the best Proof of the Strength of their religious Principles and Dispositions. But surely there cannot well be a greater Mistake and Absurdity, than to think that the wise and good Author of Nature, after having provided a great Variety of Objects for pleasing our bodily Senses and Appetites, should either deny, or grudge us the Enjoyment of them; or, that we can honour and please him by

a scornful or sullen Rejection of his Gifts, **SERM.**
or refusing to use them in the Order and **X.**
Proportion, in which he intended them for
our Support and Comfort. It is certain,
that none of the various Kinds of Pleasure
with which the World abounds, that none
even of our merely sensitive Gratifications,
are in every Instance and Degree unlawful:
All of them indeed may be grossly cor-
rupted and abused, but they may likewise
be commendably, or at least innocently en-
joyed; and it is the Business of the superior
Powers of our Nature, to point out to us
the allowed and just Use of them, and to
prevent our transgressing the Bounds of Rea-
son and Religion, in the Acquisition and
Enjoyment of them. And if we will but
follow the Directions of our Conscience and
Reason in this Matter, we shall always pur-
sue and use all sensitive Goods, and all ex-
ternal Advantages, with an Affection so
proportioned to the true Value of them,
and so strictly subordinated to our Desires
of Virtue, and the Divine and permanent
Joys which spring from thence, as will se-
cure our Conduct from an Imputation of
Immorality, and render it quite unneces-
sary, in order to preserve our Innocence,
and arrive at the higher Degrees of Reli-
X gious

SERMON. *religious Perfection, to renounce the World,*
 X. *and to betake ourselves to a recluse and austere Life.* The Truth is, this sort of Life is so far from having any extraordinary Merit in it, that it is a sure Indication of the Weakness and Impotency of our Spirits, and of their being under the Power of some unbecoming and unmanly Affections; and is so far from adorning and recommending Religion, that it gives it a most disagreeable and forbidding Aspect, and deters Multitudes from it, who judging of it from the Effect which they see it to have on many of the greatest Pretenders to it, conclude that it is destructive of the Happiness of Mankind, and designed for a Grievance and Punishment to them: Not but that it may be very prudent, and even necessary to abridge ourselves frequently in the Use of the most innocent sensual Gratifications; that by this Means we may render the Resignation of all Pleasures of this Kind more easy and practicable, in case, either our Duty to God, or any important Services which we may owe to our Country, or our Friends, required such a Sacrifice at our Hands; and for confirming ourselves in a stronger Habit of Moderation and Temperance with respect to these Enjoyments.

a Life of licentious Pleasure:

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But to affect the Severity of a State of great S E R M.
and constant Mortification, as if there were
something peculiarly excellent in it, and
desirable for its own Sake, argues at the
least, an injudicious Mind, void of all ra-
tional Apprehensions of Religion and the
Duties of Man, and infatuated by
some low Superstition, or extravagant En-
thusiasm.

2. From what has been said, we may
see how very much mistaken those Persons
are, who have a high Opinion of the
Excellence and Happiness of a Life of
inordinate Pleasure. There is hardly any
Vice which has not some specious Colours
thrown upon it, to hide its Deformity, and
make it sit the more light and easy upon
the Mind. And it is certain that the plea-
surable Vices, as they are accounted, have
been as artfully varnished over by the de-
lusive Imaginations of Men, as any others
whatsoever: They have been represented
as *Sociableness and good Nature, Politeness
and good Breeding, Manliness and Galantry
of Spirit, an elegant and delicate Enjoyment
of Life.* And not only have the Men of
Pleasure themselves been intoxicated with
these Notions, but some others also, who
are far enough from their Course and Man-

SERM. *ner* of Life, have, from Want of Reflection, or some particular Gloominess of Temper, made them some unwary Concessions; as if abstracting from Futurity, and so far as relates to this World, their Condition was to be envied, and the Part which they acted, was the wisest and happiest that could be chosen by them. But for whatever Reasons Men may think favourably of a Life of Pleasure, their Judgment of it is plainly rash and ill-grounded; as it is impossible that any thing tending to the Perfection, Ornament, and Happiness of the human Nature, can be built upon the Ruins of the noble Powers and amiable Affections of that Nature; as it is certain, on the contrary, that the unavoidable Consequences of suffering our Powers of Conscience and Reason to lose their Authority, and to be trampled upon by any of our inferior Appetites and Passions, must be Baseness, Impotency, and Slavery of Mind, together with Disgrace and Contempt, Uneasiness, and Misery. Nor will it be sufficient to object here, that the Men addicted to a Life of Pleasure, are often Persons of great Justice, Truth, Humanity, Friendship, and Generosity, and appear to be the most gay, easy, and satisfied of all Men: For though

it must be allowed, that several of them, whose natural Dispositions prompt them strongly to the Practice of the social Virtues, do in many Cases, where their favourite Passions are not interested, and while they have made no great Progress in Voluptuousness, behave very commendably and well; yet they are always destitute of that Integrity of Heart, of that uniform Regard to the Objects morally good and excellent, which is necessary to the forming of a truly worthy and manly Character; and as the Love of vicious Pleasures increases in them, all their good Affections are gradually declining, and it but seldom happens, that they are not at last ready to sacrifice all Regards to Morality, and to act the most unjust, treacherous, and cruel Part that can be, whenever the Obtaining the Gratification of their Desires, makes it necessary to them to do so. And as to the Happiness which these Men boast of; it must be considered, that the Happiness of a Man is not to be judged of, from the Openness of his Countenance, and the Gaiety of his Behaviour in publick Places; nor from an occasional Flow of Spirits, and noisy Laughter and Mirth; nor yet from the momentary Transports of some

SERMON. sensual Delights. True Happiness is a very
 X. solid and substantial Thing, and as the Seat
 of it is within, it arises only from Affec-
 tions justly ballanced, and operating in a
 due Proportion towards their respective Ob-
 jects, under the Inspection and Influence of
 our moral and rational Faculties; from a
 Mind quite composed and easy within itself,
 which is able to take a Review of its own
 Actions with Approbation, and to look up
 to the Supreme Arbiter of its Fate with
 Confidence and Joy. Now with respect
 to this, which is the Principal, or rather
 the only Happiness of a Man, it is evident,
 that the Men who pursue a voluptuous and
 libertine Life, must be in a great measure,
 or altogether Strangers to it; since there is
 hardly any thing to be found in their Minds,
 but Disorder and Confusion, exorbitant Pas-
 sions and restless Desires; and if at any time
 they happen to be grave and thoughtful, Dis-
 turbance and Fear, Remorse and Self-con-
 demnation. So that under whatever plausible
 Appearances a Life of Pleasure may be
 set out and recommended, it must be far
 from being an Object either of Admiration,
 or Envy, to a considerate Man. The Per-
 sons who run into it, whatever good Opi-
 nion they may have of their own State,
 have

have really got a Plague, which preys upon and consumes their very Vitals, and may, in the midst of all the Glare and Splendor, with which they are sometimes surrounded, be fitly compared, according to our Saviour's Similitude, to Sepulchres finely polished and adorned without, while within they are full of Corruption and Rottenness.

From what has been discoursed, we may see a very just and plain Reason for the severe Threatnings of Christianity, against the Voluptuousness and Debauchery of Mankind. In the several Catalogues, or Enumerations, which the Sacred Writers give us of those Sins or Vices, which are inconsistent with Religion, and exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven, the Crimes which proceed from an immoderate Love of Pleasure are always inserted. It is not necessary to recite particular Passages to shew this to be the Case; all who are in any measure acquainted with the New Testament, must know that it is so, and that St. Paul particularly has frequently declared, that they who commit such Crimes, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Now this has appeared to be a very harsh Doctrine, to several Persons, who are not at all

SERMON **XX** *insensible of the Difference between Virtue and Vice, in general, and of the Merit of the one, and the Ill-Desert of the other, who profess to hate the Vices of Dishonesty and Fraud, Oppression, and Tyranny, Uncharitableness, and Cruelty, and acknowledge it to be very meet and right in the Governor of the World, to animadvert severely upon them: But as for the Sins of Debauchery, which imply no Malice or Ill-will, as they suppose, and are only the Excesses of our softer Passions and Inclinations, they can see no great Evil in these, and think, that if there be any Guilt in them, it is only in a small Degree, and that they are to be considered, as the Fraillties and Infirmities of the human Nature, which call for the Compassion and easy Forgiveness of our Maker, rather than as flagrant Enormities, which are to expose Men to the final Condemnation of God, and deprive them of the Happiness of another World. But all Cavils and Objections against this Part of the Gospel-Constitution must immediately vanish, if we reflect on the pernicious Effects which Vices of this Sort have on the Minds of Men; how they degrade and enslave our governing Faculties, and pervert and debase our generous*
Instincts

Instincts and Affections; how they divert us from the proper Employments of intelligent and moral Agents, and, so far as their Influence extends, render us quite incapable of these Employments, and consequently of the Happiness which results from them. So that by indulging ourselves in extravagant Pleasures, and suffering Habits of Luxury and Debauchery to prevail and grow in us, we effectually disqualify ourselves for the sublime Enjoyments of a future State, which are to be the Fruits and Rewards of Improvements in Wisdom and Virtue, of well exercised moral Powers, and of Affections duly disciplined and cultivated in this World; and therefore, if what the Objection says, was true, though it is very far from being so, that these Vices implied no Ill-will to Society, yet they always in Time breed so much Blindness and Stupidity of Mind, and so much Corruption and Putrefaction of Heart in those who are accustomed to them, as will insuperably bar their Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, and even lay the Foundation of the most exquisite Distress and Torment to them. The Sentence, therefore, which the Gospel pronounces against Men of dissolute and debauched Lives, is plainly and perfectly

SERMON perfectly just, as it is agreeable to the natural Constitution and Order of Things, and appoints no other Punishment to them, than what must come upon them, in Consequence of their gross Depravations and Corruptions.

X.
4. Lastly, we may here see the Necessity of withstanding all Allurements and Temptations to a Life of licentious Pleasure. If the Apprehension of Danger will Alarm us in any Case, it may certainly do so in this, where our greatest, our everlasting Interest is at Stake. There is indeed sufficient Cause for watching against every kind of Vice, on Account of its destructive Tendency; but there is a particular Reason for standing upon our Guard against Voluptuousness; because as it has as ruinous Consequences as any Vice, so it is, perhaps, of all Vices the most insinuating and en- snaring: For our Inclinations to Pleasure being among the strongest Propensities of our Nature, and it being plainly just and reasonable to indulge and gratify them within certain Bounds and Measures, we are very apt, from the innocent and justifiable Gratifications of them, to slide insensibly into those which are criminal and immoral; and it is not at all improbable but that many having once tasted the intoxicating Cup, will

will be for taking a larger and deeper Draught, and so proceed, till they have stupified their Powers, and are bereft of every worthy Sentiment and Principle, and given over to vile Affections, and a reprobate Mind. This is the Course, which too strong a Desire of Pleasure has been known to take, in innumerable Instances. It concerns all Men, therefore, and especially those, whose Age, Temper, and Situation in the World, expose them more particularly to the Solicitations of Pleasure, to guard strictly against the Attacks of this subtil and dangerous Enemy, *which has cast down many wounded, and by which many strong Men have been slain.* And as the only sure Armour of Defence in this Warfare, is an habitual Temperance, with respect to all sensitive Enjoyments, and all the good Things of this World, let us take Care to acquire and cultivate this Virtue by all proper Means; by attending diligently to the several Motions of our Appetites and Passions, and refusing steadily to gratify them, however violent and craving, till we are authorized by the calm Judgment of our superior Powers to do so; by abstaining from all Indulgences which would inflame our Desires, and limiting ourselves in the Use

St. M.

X.

Rom. i.

26, 28.

Prov. vii.

26.

SERM. Use even of many innocent Gratifications ;

X. by affecting our Minds with a strong Sense

of the small Importance of the most refined outward Delights, to a Man of a correct Judgment, who is provided with all the Necessaries, and the common Accommodations and Comforts of Life, and of the great Risque which the Person always runs, who has an Affluence of such Enjoyments; by avoiding, as much as we can, all Places and Companies, where we may be in Danger of falling into any Excess or Debauchery, and using great Caution when, at any Time, we happen to be in them; by shunning a State of Idleness and Sloth, which relaxes all the Powers both of the Mind and Body, and gives rise to many loose and mischievous Passions; and, lastly, by calling down into our Hearts, in the Exercise of a sincere and humble Devotion, the Influence of the Divine Spirit, which will enable us to purify our Minds, and to *subdue the Flesh, with all its Affections and Lusts.*

Gal. v.
24.

S E R.

SERMON XI.

Of Meekness and Quietness of Spirit.

I PETER III. 4.

A meek and quiet Spirit, which is in the Sight of God of great Price.

THE Connexion and immediate De-
sign of these Words is this : St. Peter XI.
having in the foregoing Chapter exhorted all Christians in general to Obedience to their civil Governors, and Servants particularly to the Subjection which they owed to their Masters, proceeds at the beginning of this, to press upon Wives a Submission to their Husbands, in all lawful and reasonable Things ; and as an Inducement to this Behaviour, he suggests to them that it might be a very probable Means of bringing over such of their Husbands as were unconverted, to the sincere Profession and

SERM.

XI.

and Practice of Christianity, when they observed the good Effect which this Religion had upon their Minds; after which he goes on to advise them, to recommend themselves always to their Husbands, and all about them, not so much by outward Gaiety, and adventitious Ornaments, such as *plaiting the Hair, and wearing of Gold, and fine Apparel*; as by the substantial and incorruptible Beauties of the Mind, particularly by the *Ornament of a meek, quiet, and sweet Temper*, a Thing which infinitely surpasses all external Splendor, and artificial Accomplishments, and which will render them very lovely and estimable, in the Eyes not only of Men, but of God himself. This is the immediate View of St. Peter in these Words.

But though the Spirit which is here recommended by the Apostle, is more particularly becoming that part of the human Species, who are peculiarly formed for the Exercise of the gentler and softer Affections, yet as it is an Ornament of our Nature in general, and necessary to be acquired by every one of us, I shall, according to this more extensive View of it, treat of it in the following Discourse: In which I propose to consider, *First*, What is implied in this

meek

meek and quiet Spirit, which St. Peter here SERM. 2
recommends. XLIX
Secondly, The Reasons why
we should acquire and cultivate this Tem-
per. *Thirdly*, The Methods of forming
and raising it in us. After which, I shall
conclude with a Reflection or two upon
this Subject.

I I shall consider what is implied in a
meek and quiet Spirit. And for explaining
this, we must observe that the Class of our
Affections which are called the *irascible*,
such as Impatience of Suffering, Indigna-
tion, Resentment, and the like, having for
their Object, the Avoidance or Removal of
Pain, and the Prevention or Redress of In-
juries, are laid very strong in our Nature,
as it is indeed necessary they should be, in
order to their attaining their Ends; and as
the Commotions of them are frequently so
violent, that they are apt to over-power our
rational Faculties, and to hurry us into very
unjustifiable Measures, they are ballanced,
(which is the Case of almost all the strong
Affections in the human Constitution) by
Dispositions of a contrary Direction and
Tendency; and from the joint Effect of
these opposite Principles, the Beauty and
Order of this Part of our Frame result.

Now

SER. M. Now the Counterpoise to our irascible Passions, are, in some Instances, a Respect or Reverence for the Appointments of Providence; and, in others, Compassion and Benevolence towards Mankind; which are not to eradicate any of our natural Feelings, to take away our Dislike and Aversion to Pain, or to render us insensible to Acts of Iniquity and Cruelty, and to suppress intirely our Indignation and Resentment against them; but which leaving us sensible of the natural Evils which befall us, and to do whatever we justly can to remove them, are to make us bear them, while they continue, with a decent Submission; and which allowing us to conceive a Hatred of Injustice and Inhumanity, and to express a becoming Indignation against them, are to curb the Violence, and prevent the Excesses of these Affections, and always dispose us to consult the Peace and Happiness of Society, and to live on Terms of Love and Friendship with all about us. When these Principles operate in this Manner, they produce in us, that Temper of Meekness, Gentleness, and Quietness, which the Apostle here requires: As will appear, from considering particularly the several Things which are comprehended in it.

One Thing included in this Temper is a calm Submission under the merely natural Evils and Calamities which we meet with in the World. As these come to pass in Consequence of a general Constitution or Plan, which has been formed and fixed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and are all ordered both for the common Good of Mankind, and the Benefit of the particular Persons to whom they happen, there is none who seriously considers this, and has any command of his Passions, who will not acquiesce in them, without murmuring and complaining. Indeed there cannot be a greater Indication of a turbulent, restless, and impatient Spirit, as well as of the Want of a due Reverence for the supreme Wisdom and Excellence, than to repine at the Afflictions which come upon us in the natural Order and Course of Things, and to censure the Dispensations of Providence, as unjust or unkind, when Events do not always fall out according to our Desires, and answer our Expectations. A Man of a meek composed Mind, though he will use all proper Means for averting, or removing, Distresses and Calamities, yet will be always ready to receive Evil at the Hand of God, as well as he receives Good; and when

Job ii. 10.

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844 M. he smarts under the sharpest Pain, will be

XX. far from charging God foolishly, but gently
 Job i. 22. resign himself to the Divine Correction,

supporting his Spirit with this Considera-
 1 Sam. iii. tion, *It is the Lord, let him do what seem-*
 18. *eth him good*; and when he is most desirous

of Relief from his Afflictions, he will al-
 ways ask it, with the Reserve, of its being
 consistent with the wise and gracious De-
 signs of the Divine Government; saying,
 after the amiable Example of our Saviour,
 Luke Father, *if thou be willing, remove this Cup*
 xxii. 42. *from me; nevertheless, not my Will, but*
thine be done.

2. Another Thing comprehended in a
 meek and quiet Spirit, is a Moderation of
 our Anger and Resentment upon Occasion
 of moral Wrongs, or Injuries. It is plain
 that we are very differently affected with
 mere Harms and Sufferings, which are the
 Consequences only of the natural Constitu-
 tion of the World, or of the Ignorance and
 Inadvertence of Men; and with those Evils,
 which we call Injuries, which we appre-
 hend to flow from some iniquitous or bad
 Dispositions of rational and moral Agents;
 whether they affect the Publick, or Our-
 selves. The former, whenever we act as
 becomes us, we bear with no other senti-
 ments

ments and Dispositions, than those of Calm-
ness, Patience, and Submission: But the
latter, though we are to submit to them
too, so far as we are Sufferers by them, as
Events which befall us by the Direction of
a wise and just Providence; yet, always
kindle our Anger, or Resentment. And
indeed it may be very proper to give Way
to this Passion in some Measure: For An-
ger is far from being, in every Instance, and
Degree, sinful. It is one of our natural
Affections, and implanted in us for very
wise and useful Purposes; for rendering us
formidable to those who would unjustly
attack us, and preventing the Execution of
their mischievous Designs; for correcting
the Tempers of the Injurious themselves,
and obliging them to a Reparation of the
Damages sustained through their Means;
and for bringing them, when their Crimes
are notorious, and publicly offensive, to
that exemplary Punishment, which it is
necessary for the common Benefit of the
World, they should undergo. And who-
ever is conscious of exercising his Indigna-
tion and Resentment only so far as is requi-
site for these Purposes, may be sure that he
is acting not only an innocent, but a wor-
thy and generous Part. But as our Resent-

ment, especially when it takes its Rise from a Sense of private Wrongs, is apt to be attended with very strong Emotions, and to carry us precipitately into the worst Conduct, which is often destructive both to others and ourselves: nothing is to be more diligently watched than its Progress, and more carefully guarded against than its Extravagancies. And the *Meekness and Quietness of our Spirits* most eminently appear in the Restraint and due Government of this Passion; in hindering its Rising without a sufficient Cause, and its discovering itself, whatever Cause may be given for it, in any unseemly Transports and Effects; in preventing its continuing so long, and returning so often, as to corrupt our Tempers, by its settling, either in habitual Peevishness and Frowardness; or in Rancour and Revenge, and a Disposition *to return Evil for Evil*; and in suppressing it intirely, as soon as the natural and just Ends, for which we give way to this Passion, have been obtained. These are the proper and natural Effects of a meek and quiet Temper; contrary to the Behaviour of those who are fierce and boisterous, quick to take Offence, and by every trifling Provocation are blown into a Flame, and who in all Cases of Injury,

Of Meekness and Quietness of Spirit.

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M. 7. 25
S. 8. M.
VI
jury, whether it be great or small, vent themselves in Rage and Fury; or, who are for ever querulous and sour, uneasy and discontented, repeating and aggravating the ill Usage and Affronts which they have received; and are full of Bitterness and Spite, plainly shewing that they aim at none of the justifiable Ends of Resentment, but are intent on the mere Harm, or Ruin, of the Persons who offend them. These are Things which are utterly inconsistent with a meek, calm, and composed State of Mind, and can be found only in a Man, who has no Rule over his own Spirit, and is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls.

Prov. xxv.
28.

3. A meek and quiet Spirit farther implies a sincere Desire of the Harmony and Happiness of Society, and a Disposition to cultivate Peace and Friendship with all about us. To a Man in whom this Spirit strongly prevails, nothing can be more harsh, and disagreeable, than Feuds and Factions, Contentions and Animosities, whether publick, or private: To engage in these, would be contrary both to the Sense which he has of his Duty, as a Man, and a Christian, and to the natural Turn and Temper of his Mind. He will, therefore, be far from embarking with any Party, or

SERM. endeavouring to embroil the Affairs of the

XI. Publick, under any plausible Pretences, only to work himself and his Associates into Stations of Power, or Wealth; and as he will not be a Disturber of Society, from any ambitious, or interested Views of his own; so neither will he be drawn into any seditious Practices, by the Artifice of others, who act from such Views or Motives: He will not have an implicit Confidence in any political Leaders, but will carefully examine their Reports and Representations of Persons and Things, before he suffers them to make an Impression on him; being ever ready to pay all due Respect to lawful Authority, to put a candid Construction on those Actions of his Governors which may appear doubtful, to censure the smaller Mistakes of their Administration with Gentleness, and to correct and redress the more grievous Errors of it, if such are at any Time to be found, not in a mere Spirit of Opposition and Contradiction, but in the Uprightness of his Heart, and from a real Concern for securing and establishing the publick Tranquillity and Welfare. And as a Man of a meek and peaceable Temper will thus study the Order and Happiness of the Community of which he is a Member;

ber; so will he likewise consult the Quiet
and Ease of the particular Persons with
whom he has any Intercourse, and endeavour
to be on good Terms with all around
him. For this Purpose, he will take care
to perform the Duties which he owes to
Men, according to their various Ranks and
Relations; cheerfully paying a just Honour,
and respectful Submission to his Superiors;
treating his Equals, with Affability, Cour-
tesy, and Modesty; and his Inferiors, with
Equity and Kindness, Tenderness and Con-
descension; and will behave towards all in
general, not only without Offence, but
with Good-will and Humanity. He will
be particularly cautious in Points, from
whence Animosities and Differences among
Men are apt to arise; such as intermeddling
unnecessarily in the Affairs of others, the
Prying into their Secrets, the Giving Ear
to Calumnies and Whispers against them,
and the Divulging rashly what he may
have heard to the Disadvantage of their
Characters. He will by no Means impose
his own Sentiments, either in religious, or
civil Matters, upon those he converses with,
as the Terms of Concord and Union with
him; but will allow all Men the free Ex-
ercise of their own Judgment and Under-

SERM.

XL

standings, and value them, not so much for
 any Notions and Opinions which they may
 have, as for partaking of those good Qua-
 lities and Dispositions of Mind, which are
 the chief Excellencies of the Human Na-
 ture, and the highest Accomplishments of
 a Christian. He will not, without a very
 just Cause, appear to be affronted or dis-
 obliged, but will make Allowances for the
 Prejudices and Weaknesses of Men, and
 always put the best Interpretation on the
 Conduct of his Neighbours towards him
 which it will bear; and when he is sensi-
 ble that he has been ill used, he will be
easy to be intreated, and reconciled to those
 who have offended him, upon any equita-
 ble Acknowledgment and Reparation; and
 even willing to depart from his Right in
 some Instances, and to give up some Points
 of Form and Ceremony, rather than to
 keep up Resentment, and perpetuate a
 Quarrel. Prudence indeed must direct him
 how far he is to proceed in the Concessions
 and Condescensions which he makes to an
 Adversary, and to make them in such a
 Way, as not to lay himself open to new
 Rudenesses and Insults by his Lenity and
 Forbearance; and so as that they may ap-
 pear to flow, not from a Meanness of Mind,

off the Want of Spirit in him; but from the
 the Goodness and Generosity of his Heart,
 and his sincere Love of Peace. But, with
 these Cautions, a Man of a composed, meek,
 and quiet Disposition, would certainly chuse
 to submit to some Inconvenience, rather
 than to live in a State of Discord and En-
 mity, or even of Shyness and Coolness with
 his Neighbours.

II. I shall now consider the Reasons,
 why we should acquire and cultivate this
 Temper, which St. Peter recommends to
 us. The Apostle himself suggests an Ar-
 gument of great Weight to this Purpose in
 the Text, taken from the intrinsic Digi-
 nity and Value of a meek and quiet Tem-
 per, which, he tells us, is of great Price in
 the Sight of God. It is one of those Things
 which are lovely and of good Report, which
 is both approved by Men, and acceptable to
 God. We find that we are so made, that
 we cannot but admire and love it; and
 as God, who has endowed us with the
 Power of discerning its Excellence, must
 know the Worth of it more accurately, he
 will still in a higher Degree approve of it.
 Indeed the partaking eminently of this
 Temper

SERM.

XXI

Temper, argues a peculiar Force and Greatness of Mind, and a most noble Constitution of Soul; for our Sense of Evil and Suffering, and particularly of the more grievous moral Evils being very acute and lively, and the Passions which arise from thence, being among the most powerful and impetuous Principles in our Nature, the Man who has all these under such an habitual good Governance, that he is not led by them, into either any Immorality, or any Indecency, is certainly possessed of an uncommon Strength of Mind, and is arrived at a great Perfection in Virtue. He shews that he has established his moral and rational Faculties in the Supreme Command, as they ought to be, within him; that he can exercise the several Powers and Principles in his Nature in the justest Order, and that he is in the Way of making a continual Progress in Goodness; in short, that he has accomplished the most glorious and heroic Work of which a Man is capable. For a Victory over our own Passions, in regard both of the Principles from which it springs, and the Zeal, Perseverance, and Activity of Mind, which are implied in it, is plainly the greatest and most honourable of all Atchievements. *Solomon*, therefore, very

Of Meekness and Quietness of Spirit.

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very justly prefers the Person who governs
his Anger and Resentment, to any of the
great Conquerors of the World. *He that*
is slow to Anger, says he, is better than the
Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than
he that taketh a City. Whereas, in the
Judgment of the same Solomon, the Want
of a due Command of the Passions, is a
clear Indication of an impotent and deformed,
and a ruinous and desolate State of
Mind: *He that hath no Rule over his own*
Spirit, says he, is like a City that is broken
down, and without Walls. If, therefore,
we would aspire to the Exercise of the most
generous and perfect Virtue; if we would
be reputed Persons of noble and great
Minds, and procure ourselves Esteem and
Honour from Mankind; above all, if we
are desirous of that truest Honour which
cometh from God himself, and would be
entitled to his Approbation; let us take
Care to acquire and raise in ourselves a meek
and gentle, a quiet and peaceable Disposition;
and never imagine, as many foolishly do,
that strong Resentment, and a turbulent
Behaviour in the Case of every little
Offence, or Affront, that may be offered to
us, can be an Argument of the Generosity,
Fortitude, and Manliness of our Souls:
The

Prov. xvi.

32.

Prov. xxv.

28.

SERMON. The Impatience and Unreasonableness which we express, the Confusion and Precipitancy with which we act, and the unjust or cruel Things which we often do upon such an Occasion, sufficiently discover the Weakness and Disorder of our Minds, and must make our Conduct, instead of being honourable, to appear very mean and despicable, in the Eyes both of God, and of all wise Men.

Let us consider the Importance of a meek and peaceable Spirit in Religion, and its Necessity for our obtaining the Mercy and Forgiveness of God. Religion is evidently intended for the Benefit of Mankind: The Business of it, therefore, is to inculcate upon us universal Justice, Meekness, Gentleness, Forgiveness, Peaceableness, and Benevolence, from the Exercise of which the Happiness of Men proceeds. The Practice of these Virtues was always essential to true Religion, and by far the most acceptable Service that could be offered to the great and good Creator of all Things. But yet, it is certain that some of them, as particularly, Meekness, Gentleness, and Forgiveness, in the Case of Injuries and Offences, were too much neglected both by the Jews and Heathens;

and therefore, when our Saviour came to **settle**
 institute a new Dispensation of Religion, he **XX**
 took a great deal of Pains in urging these
 Duties upon his Followers. He began his
 Discourse upon the Mount, with declaring
 the peculiar Blessedness of an humble, meek,
 merciful, and peaceable Temper. And he
 has every where laid the greatest Stress upon
 the Exercise of Gentleness, Patience, and
 Forgiveness towards those who offend us.
 In the short Prayer which he prescribed
 for the Use of his Disciples, he has directed
 us to ask the Forgiveness of our Offences
 against God, only in like Manner, as we
 forgive every one, his Brother, his Offences
 and Trespases; and in the Words imme-
 diately following that Prayer, he has as-
 sured us, that if we forgive Men their Tres-
 passes, our heavenly Father will also forgive Matt. vi.
14, 15.
 us; whereas, if we forgive not Men their
 Trespases, neither will God be moved by
 any Intreaties to forgive ours. And in ano- v. 23,
24.
 ther Place, he tells us, that God will re-
 ceive no Offering at our Hands, while we
 have any Malice or Ill-will in our Hearts
 to our Brethren; but that we must be re-
 conciled to them, and disposed to live on
 Terms of Peace and Charity with them,
 before our religious Services will be ac-
 cepted.

Accepted. And agreeably to this Doctrine
 XII delivered by our Saviour himself, St. Paul
 teaches us, that the Temper which be-
 comes *the Elect People of God*, (by whom
 he means all professed Christians) is made

Col. iii. up of *Mercy, Humility, Kindness, Meek-*
 12—15. *ness, Long-suffering, Forbearance, Forgive-*
ness, Charity, and Peaceableness. And St.

James tells us, that *the Wisdom which is*
from above, and with which Christianity

Jam. iii. inspires all its true Professors, is *first pure,*
 17. *then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be in-*
treated, full of Mercy and good Fruits. And

— ii. he declares, that *the Man shall have Judge-*
 13. *ment without Mercy, who hath showed no*

Mercy. This, surely, may convince us,
 that a meek, forgiving, quiet Spirit, is ab-
 solutely necessary to our answering the In-
 tention of Religion, and obtaining the Ad-
 vantages of it: If we will be determined
 by the positive and express Declarations of
 our Lord and his Apostles, we must con-
 clude, that a fierce, revengeful, and tur-
 bulent Disposition is utterly inconsistent
 with the Character of true Christians, and
 cuts off all Expectation of the Rewards
 which belong to such.

3. Another Argument to make us ac-
 quire and cultivate a Spirit of Meekness and

Quietness,

Quietness, may be brought from the great **Ex. xxxiv.**
 Examples of God's Clemency and Patience, **XIX**
 and our Saviour's meek, gentle, and peace-
 able Behaviour, while he was in this World.
 God is a Pattern of the most admirable
 Clemency, Long-suffering, and Forgive-
 ness: The Character which he assumed,
 when he made a Discovery of his Glory to
 Moses, was the Lord God, merciful and
 gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in
 Goodness and Truth, keeping Mercy for
 Thousands, and forgiving Iniquity, Trans-
 gression, and Sin. And it is certain that
 he acts up to this Character, in all his Ad-
 ministrations towards Mankind. How pa-
 tiently does he wait for the Repentance of
 Sinners, not being willing that any of them
 should perish? How does he endeavour to
 overcome their Evil with his Goodness, and
 to effect their Amendment by his Indulgence
 and Favour? He distributes the Benefits of
 his Sun and Rain, and all Things necessary
 for the Support of Life, equally to all, that
 by the same Dispensations of his Provi-
 dence, whereby he encourages and rewards
 the Good, he may also reclaim the Bad.
 When at any Time he punishes Men, it is
 with a gracious Intention, for the Amend-
 ment of their Hearts, when gentler Ways
 of

Some of dealing with them fail to produce this Effect. And when he saw that no other Method would be so effectual for the Happiness of Sinners, he, with the most wonderful Mercy and Condescension, sent his only-begotten Son into the World, to propose and establish the Scheme for their Reconciliation and Acceptance with himself. Thus has God most remarkably expressed his Clemency, Forbearance, and Forgiveness to us all, even when we were considered as *Sinners, and Enemies to him*. And whenever we reflect upon this Conduct of the universal Governor and Father of Mankind, we cannot but greatly approve, and adore it. Is it not most becoming us then to conform ourselves to it in our own Behaviour, and to be, in our Proportion, indulgent, patient, and condescending to all, and placable and merciful to those who injure and offend us? The Excellency of the Example, and the Respect which we owe to the Deity, must be sufficient to engage us to do this: Besides that it is expressly made a part of our Duty as Christians: *Be ye perfect, says our Saviour, even as your Father which is in Heaven, is perfect*; by exercising your Forbearance and Charity, even towards Enemies,

mies, in Imitation of the most diffusive and SERM.
unlimited Goodness of God. *Let all Bitterness and Wrath, says St. Paul, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put* XI. Ephes. iv. 31, 32.
away from you, with all Malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you. Be ye, therefore, the Followers of God, as dear Children. — v. 1.

Our blessed Saviour has also given us a most amiable Example of Meekness and Patience, of Gentleness and Quietness in his Behaviour and Conversation upon Earth. Though our Lord was, not only perfectly innocent, but the great Benefactor of the World; yet never was any Person more abused, insulted, and injured, than he was. He was exposed to all the Variety of unrighteous Treatment; to Calumny and Misrepresentation, to Contempt and Scorn, to Persecution of all Kinds, to Death itself; all which he bore with the most perfect Patience, and the most forgiving and compassionate Disposition towards his Adversaries. For all the Indignities and Affronts, for all the Contumelies and Reproaches, that were cast upon him by his Enemies; nay, for all their most wicked Designs and Contrivances against him, during

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ring

During the Time of his publick Ministry, he
XI made no other Returns than good Offices
 of all Sorts: And when their Malice at last
 succeeded; he was brought, according to
 Isa. liii. 7. the ancient Prophecy concerning him, as a
*Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep be-
 fore her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not
 his Mouth, in any rash, peevish, or unbe-
 coming Expressions; he even prayed for
 his Persecutors and Murderers in the midst
 of his Torments; when he was reviled by
 them, he reviled not again; when he suf-
 fered, he threatened not, but committed him-
 self to him who judgeth righteously; and
 herein, as St. Peter observes, he has left
 us an Example, that we should follow his
 Steps. And he himself calls upon us to
 imitate him, particularly in the Meekness
 and Humility of his Behaviour; Learn of
 me, says he, for I am meek and lowly in
 Heart. St. Paul likewise beseeches us by the
 Meekness and Gentleness of Christ, which
 he supposes were Qualities that were very
 well known to belong to him, and which
 should make the deepest Impressions upon
 the Hearts of all Christians. And in ano-
 ther Place, he exhorts us to forgive one
 another, even as Christ hath forgiven us.
 And certainly, if we profess to be the Dis-
 ciples*

1 Pet. ii.
23.]

Ver. 21.

Matt. xi.
29.

2 Cor. x.
1.

Col. iii.
13.

ciples and Servants of Christ, we must think
 ourselves bound, both in Duty, and De- XIX
 cency, to imitate his Example. *If any* John ii.
Man saith he abides in him, says St. John,
he ought also so to walk, even as he walked.
To call me Master and Lord, says our Sa- John xiii.
viour, and ye say well, for so I am: If I 13, 14.
then, your Lord and Master, have washed
your Feet, ye ought also to wash one another's
Feet. The same Reasoning will hold with
 respect to all the Virtues of which our Sa-
 viour has given us an Example; and par-
 ticularly with respect to the Virtues of
 Meekness, Gentleness, and Peaceableness in
 our whole Behaviour: *If I your Lord and*
Master, have not thought it beneath me,
to endure patiently the Abuses which have
been given me in this World, and to ex-
press always a meek, forgiving, calm, and
quiet Temper under the highest Provo-
cations and Offences; neither are you to
think it unworthy of you, to do the same:
For I have given you an Example, that ye Ver. 15,
should do, as I have done to you. Verily, 16.
verily, I say unto you, the Servant is not
greater than his Lord, neither is he that is
sent, greater than he that sent him.

4. We should cultivate a meek and quiet
 Spirit, from a Regard to the Peace of Man-

SER. II. kind, and the Happiness of the particular
XI. Persons, with whom we have any Inter-
 course and Conversation. It is certain that
 the Want of this Spirit, and the Prevalence
 of the contrary one, has been the Spring of
 infinite Confusions and Distractions, both
 in the publick Affairs of the World, and
 the private Concerns of Life. What Scenes
 of Disorder, Mischief, and Desolation have
 the furious Motions of Anger and Wrath
 produced? Many of the most dreadful na-
 tional Wars have arisen from this Source.
 And when the angry and turbulent Passions
 of Men have not been attended with Con-
 sequences of such universal Terror and Ruin,
 yet what irreconcilable Jarrings and Dis-
 cords, what immortal Hatreds and En-
 mities, have they bred in particular Societies,
 or Neighbourhoods, putting an utter End
 to all friendly Correspondence among Per-
 sons, who are obliged, in point both of Du-
 ty and Interest, to live together in Love,
 and involving them in Contentions, which
 prove destructive not only to their Quiet,
 but often to their Fortune, Health, and
 Life itself? And how baneful are these
 Passions to the Happiness of private Fa-
 milies, as they render the Persons in whom
 they prevail, perverse and froward to their
 nearest

nearest Relations, severe and harsh to all S.E.R.M.
under their Authority, and by this Means XI.
exasperate the Spirits of those, whom they
use so ill, against themselves, till all Har-
mony and Love is lost among them, and
their Life becomes a Scene of continual
Strife and Vexation? But now, on the other
hand, a Spirit of Meekness, Gentleness, and
Quietness, must have quite different Effects:
If this obtained universally in the World,
there could be no such Things, as either
publick, or private Disturbances in it; as all
would abstain from wilful Injuries, and ea-
sily compromise any Differences that hap-
pened through mere Inadvertence and Mis-
take, and would be ever ready to oblige
one another by any Expressions of Huma-
nity, Courtesy, and Condescension in their
Power. And in Fact, this Spirit, so far as
it prevails, settles the Affairs of Mankind
in a State of good Order, Harmony, and
Peace; cementing and sweetning all Friend-
ships; and making the Intercourse of Per-
sons of the same Neighbourhood, or Fa-
mily, in the Exchange of Civilities, and in
the Discharge of the common Offices of
Life, easy and agreeable; removing from
their Conversation, all Fierceness of Pas-
sion, all Bitterness of Language, all Sour-

ness and Petulance of Humour, and all the
XI. Arrogance and Raughtiness of Pride; soft-
ening the Minds even of the Injurious and
Revengeful; and moulding them gradually
into a good Temper: For nothing, it is
certain, is so apt to make a violent and an-
gry Man relent, and to melt him into Ten-
derness and Good nature, as the Forbear-
ance, Moderation, and Gentleness of the
Person, against whom his Passion is raised.
There are but very few who are capable of
so much Wickedness, as to persist in bear-
ing hard upon a Man, who instead of re-
turning Evil for Evil, endeavours to gain
them by Acts of Complaisance and Gener-
osity. The Worst have usually so much
Goodness, as to be sensible of Benefits, and
to make some ingenious and grateful Re-
turns: And the greatest Part of Men, when
most offended, will, undoubtedly, be in-
tirely subdued by the discreet Condescen-
sions of a generous Adversary, and instead
of continuing in a State of Enmity to him,
will become his true Friends. The Maxim
of Solomon is almost always found true in
Experience, *a soft Answer turneth away*
Wrath; mild and gentle Words, with a
condescending and obliging Behaviour,
hardly fail to allay the Resentment, and
cool

Prov. xv.
1.

cool the Tempers of Men, and to put an SERM.
End to those Animosities among them,
which, by any other Means, would be
continued and encreased. Of such great
Importance is the Prevalence of a meek,
patient, and quiet Temper to the good
Order of the World, and the Happiness of
Men; and these being Things which we
are always under the strongest Obligations
to promote, we should take care to raise
this Spirit in ourselves, and by our Exam-
ple to recommend the Cultivation of it to
others, which has so much Influence upon
them.

5. *Lastly*, We should cultivate a meek
and peaceable Spirit, for our own Interest
and Satisfaction. There is hardly any thing
that can be more prejudicial to a Man, than
a wrathful, splenetick, froward, and turbu-
lent Temper. This not only indisposes him
for the serious Acts of Religion, and ren-
ders his Performance of religious Duties
unacceptable, as was observed before; but
makes him unfit to conduct the common
Affairs of the World. While he is under
the Power of this Temper, he is no more
capable of Business of any Consequence,
than a Man in a Phrensy, or under a Fit of
Drunkennes, is capable of it: The Light

Speech which should direct him is extinguished, nor

XIX clouded, and he has thrown himself into the Hands of a rash and blind Guide, which, in all probability, will lead him astray, to the great Confusion and Loss of his Affairs. And as to the Ease and Satisfaction of his Mind, it must be evident to all, who have had ever so little Experience of the Workings of Angry, Revenge, and Peevishness, that nothing can be more ruinous to that, than the Indulgence of these Dispositions. Whenever they prevail, they necessarily destroy all our soft and pleasing Sensations, keep the Mind galling and fretting, and never suffer us to enjoy any Quiet, or Rest. The Gratification of our ill-natured Passions will indeed afford us some Pleasure, as it will relieve us, for a Time, from the Rack, or Torture, which we were enduring. But while the ill Turn of Mind continues in us, the Remembrance even of past Affronts and Offences, or any new Provocation that we meet with, will revive our Torment, and it shall be in the Power of every Mortal, who knows our Temper, and does not dread our Resentment, to make us perpetually miserable. But now the Man, who has confirmed himself in a Habit of Meekness, Patience, and Gentleness, is free

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from

from all this Distraction and Wretchedness, and partakes of the most serene Joy and Satisfaction. As he is always calm, and in Possession of his Reason, he is at liberty to manage his Affairs to the best Advantage for himself. And, whatever Sufferings he may have in outward Things, he is sure of the purest Pleasure from the Exercise of his Good-will and Humanity, which cannot be taken from him by the greatest Malice of his Adversaries; for by despising and neglecting the Injuries which they do him, or resenting them only in a Way becoming him as a Man, and a Christian, he turns the Edge of them, and prevents the Uneasiness, which otherwise he would feel from them. And whenever he reflects upon his own affectionate and generous Temper, which prompts him to forbear, and with well, even to those who have deserved ill of him, and to study, so far as it is in his Power, the Peace and Happiness of all Men, it must be a very agreeable Object of Contemplation to him. The Consciousness of so much solid Worth and Goodness, must make him to delight in his own Nature, and give him the highest Self-Approbation. So that for our own Sakes, we should carefully acquire a meek and quiet

SERMON quiet Spirit, which is always one of the
XI. best and greatest Sources of our Welfare
 and Tranquillity.

III. The Third Thing proposed, was to
 consider the Methods of forming and raising
 a Spirit of Meekness and Quietness in
 us. And,

I. For attaining to that Part of it, which
 consists in a patient Submission to the purely
 natural Evils which befall us in the World,
 the great Rule is, to impress our Minds
 with a clear and deep Conviction of the
 Wisdom, Equity, and Goodness of Provi-
 dence, by the Direction, or Permission of
 which, all such Evils come upon us. If
 we are fully persuaded that the World is
 under a perfectly wise, just, and good Ad-
 ministration, and that all the Events which
 happen to Mankind, fall out in the best
 Manner, for the Advantage of the Species
 in general, and so far as is consistent with
 that, for the Good of every one in par-
 ticular; we must, if we have any good
 Principles and Dispositions in us, easily
 reconcile ourselves to disastrous Occur-
 rences, and be calm and patient under our
 greatest Distresses. The lively Sense which
 some of the wiser *Heathens* had of the wise,
 and

and just, and kind Intentions of Providence SERM.
with respect to Mankind, gave them al- XI.

ways the firmest Confidence in God, and made them illustrious Examples of a manly Patience and Fortitude under the severest Trials. How unworthily, then, shall we act, if we have not the same Trust in Providence, and the same Resignation to it in Adversity, when we have not only all the Evidences which they had of the Prevalency of Wisdom and Goodness in the Constitution and Government of the Universe, but also a most extraordinary Discovery of the Love of God to Mankind, exhibited in the Gospel, with positive Declarations and Promises, that the most grievous Evils of this Life shall finally conspire to the greater Good and Happiness of all truly pious and virtuous Men. Surely, we must be very inexcusable, if we do not, by inculcating these Considerations on our Minds, acquire a Temper, which will free us from all Murmuring and Anxiety about our Concerns in this World, and make us meekly and quietly to acquiesce in the Will of God, however afflicting the Circumstances into which he puts us, may sometimes be.

2. As the most difficult Part of Meekness and Quietness of Spirit, consists in the due Government

SER. II. Government of our Resentment, with respect
XXI. *to the Authors of moral Wrongs, or In-*
juries; we must, for the Attainment of
this, take care to represent such Persons in
the most favourable Light, that we justly
can to ourselves. Our Resentment against
them will be greater or less, according to
the Opinion which we entertain of the
Principles and Motives of their Conduct.
If we apprehend them to act from pure
Malice, or a fixed Desire of our Unhap-
piness, or from such Scorn and Contempt
of us as we have no way deserved, we
shall hardly avoid having a keen Passion of
Anger raised in us against them, and be in
Danger of running into great Extravagancies,
inventing our Wrath and Revenge upon
them. It is certainly owing to such an
odious Conception of our Enemies, that
our Resentment against them becomes so
excessive as it frequently does. But if we
can allow ourselves to think that Malice, or
Contempt, may not be the Springs of those
Actions which raise our Resentment against
them at all; but that they may proceed
from Ignorance, or Inadvertence in them;
or, that they may be the Effect only of
some transient Fit of Peevishness, or Pas-
sion; or, perhaps, of their Resentment
against

against some Part of our Conduct, which SERM. XI.
has been injurious to them; or, if none
of these Causes can be assigned for the
Injustice which they do us, yet, if
we can suppose that it is only Self-love
become too violent, which has led
them into it, we shall be far more cool and
moderate in the Expressions of our Indig-
nation and Resentment against them: For,
surely, Ignorance, Forgetfulness, and Mis-
takes, and even some Fits of Frowardness
and ill Humour, must appear Things very
excusable in such imperfect fallible Crea-
tures as we are, the best of whom are not
altogether free from such Weaknesses; if
we have given the first Provocation to our
Adversaries, this may make us very patient
in bearing the Abuses which we meet with
in Return for it; or, if their immoderate
Selfishness is the Cause of their Injustice,
though this, indeed, must make them ap-
pear very mean in our Eyes, yet, in Reality,
it should not excite our Hatred and Rage
against them, so much as our Pity and Com-
passion for them. Now there is certainly
Reason for making these Suppositions fre-
quently in Favour of our Enemies: We
are all too apt in our angry and discontented
Moods, and from the Partialities of Self-
love,

SER. M. love, to magnify the Injustice of our Ad-

XI. versaries out of Measure, and beyond all

Reason; to speak of it as flowing from the worst Principles of Malice and Scorn, and as a Thing which has not, in the least, been deserved on our Part; when all, who judge calmly and without Prejudice, can easily see, that the Injuries which we so much complain of, have arisen only from some Inattention, or Misunderstanding; or, perhaps, from some disrespectful and injurious Treatment on our Side; or, at worst, from the selfish Affections of our Enemies, indulged above their due Proportion. It is certain, that there is but very little of what we call pure Malice in the Hearts of any Men; the worst do not seem capable of harbouring this, at least for any long Time. And if we ourselves come to judge as favourably of our Enemies, as those who are perfectly unprejudiced do, which by Attention and Care we may do, it would be a very effectual Means for abating our Resentment, and making us more mild, gentle, and quiet, in our Behaviour towards them than we commonly are.

3. When we feel our angry Passions beginning to move in us, let us carefully watch them, and guard against their rising

to any criminal, or unbecoming Height in *S. A. M. 2*
us. The old Rule of withstanding and *XIX*
suppressing a Disorder in the Beginning, or
first Appearance of it, is in no Case more
necessary to be observed, than in this of
inordinate Wrath and Passion. For a small
Spark of this Fire, if not extinguished, will
soon burn up into a great Flame, and gather
Strength enough to subvert all the Order of
the Soul, and to push a Man on to the most
distracted, mischievous, and fatal Conduct.
It will, therefore, be extremely necessary;
when we find ourselves growing into any
extraordinary Warmth of Temper, to pause
a little, and reflect whether that Degree of
Heat and Passion which we perceive in our-
selves can be justified? Whether it is only
a moderate and becoming Resentment of
some ill Usage which we have received;
or, whether it be not, in a great Measure,
the Effect of a boisterous and turbulent, or
of a cruel and revengeful Disposition? And if
it has the least Appearance of proceeding
from such a Disposition, let us instantly re-
strain and check it, before it becomes more un-
ruly and headstrong. And it will be more ef-
pecially proper for those, who either, are
naturally cholerick, or by bad Use and
Custom are very obnoxious to violent Fits

SERM. of Anger and Frowardness, to observe diligently all the Emotions of their Spirits, and to be very cautious in giving way to the Transports, or Impulses of their Passions: Such should ever have a most vigilant Eye upon the weak Side of their Nature, that they may not be easily overcome; or surprised, upon every slight Offence, into any Instances of an unjust, or indecent Outrage, or Impatience. And let no one pretend, that it is not in his Power to allay the Heat of his Temper, and to keep his Passions, at least for ordinary, within the Bounds of Innocence and good Manners: The most angry and impatient of us all, must be sensible, how soon we can command and compose ourselves, in our most passionate Fits, upon the sudden Appearance of a Superior, or any Person whom we highly esteem and honour in this World; which is a certain Proof that the Government of our Passions is not a Thing impracticable. It is not, indeed, to be denied, but that those who have suffered Habits of Anger and Peevishness to grow in them, will find a great Difficulty in curing their Temper perfectly, and even in reforming it to a remarkable Degree. But if they will affect their Minds with a deep

Sense

Reformation, and take up a firm and steadfast Resolution of Amendment, if they will look with a jealous Eye to all violent Sensations and Motions within them, if they will consider themselves as acting in the Presence of God, and having Reason to depend upon his Assistance in the good Work which they are about, and if, when their Passions have, in any Instances, broke out irregularly, they will, as soon as is possible, put a Stop to them, rebuke themselves for their Weakness and Folly in giving way to them, and repeat and reinforce their Purpose of Amendment; if they will steadily persevere for some Time in these Methods of disciplining their Minds, it is not to be doubted, but that they will soon perceive a happy Change in their Dispositions, that the Fierceness and Violence of their Passions will be daily abating, and that they will be gradually forming themselves into a Temper of Meekness, Gentleness, and Peace.

4. Lastly, Let us observe the Direction which our blessed Saviour has given us, to express a meek, forgiving, and peaceable Spirit, when we exercise our Devotion; and offer up our Prayers to Almighty God.

S. B. M. This is certainly one of the best Methods
 that can be of forming and improving a
 Temper of Meekness and Quietness in us;
 For if we have any Reverence of the Deity,
 we cannot surely, but be very sincere, when
 we pray, that *his Will may be done, and sub-
 mitted to, in Earth, as it is in Heaven;*
 when we beg his Forgiveness of those who
 have done us Wrong, and declare before
 him that we have forgiven them, and that
 we hope for his Mercy and Favour to our-
 selves, only on the Condition of our being
 disposed to shew Mercy, and to do Good
 to them. To deal hypoeritically in this
 Matter with the great God of Heaven and
 Earth, is such a Height of Wickedness, as
 it is to be hoped none of us are capable of
 arriving to. In order, therefore, to raise a
 meek and quiet Spirit in ourselves, let us
 not only ask the Assistance of God to in-
 crease it in us, but let us actually exercise
 and express it in the Devotions which we
 present to him. The Habits of Meekness
 and Patience grow out of the repeated Acts
 and Exercises of these Virtues; and the fre-
 quent Exercise of them, under a lively
 Sense of the Presence of God with us, and
 in solemn Addresses to him, must have a
 peculiar

peculiar Efficacy for promoting and confirming the Temper and Habit of them in us. XXI.

I shall conclude with a short Reflection or two upon this Subject.

1. From what has been said, we may see the Vanity of that Philosophy, which would persuade us that our Passions are in their own Nature Evil, and that the only Thing which a wise Man has to do with regard to them, is to extirpate, or suppress them entirely. This, if it can be ever seriously maintained by any Persons, is plainly an over-curious and false Refinement, by which, whoever pretends to shew superior Wisdom and Strength of Mind, will in the End discover only great Absurdity and Folly. However the Extravagancies and Excesses of our Passions are almost always vicious, and of an hurtful Tendency, yet the Passions themselves, as originally implanted in our Nature, and exercised according to the Dictates of Reason and Religion, are of very great Use and Necessity. Even our Anger, the most dangerous and destructive of all our Passions, when not duly regulated, could not be wanted without great Inconveniencies. Our Business, therefore, both as reasonable Beings, and as Christians, is

SHALL not to root out, nor extinguish our Passions,

XL

but to govern and direct them well: When we do so, we act the Part assigned to us here becomingly and worthily; and prepare ourselves for being advanced hereafter into higher Scenes, where we shall be able to discharge the Duties of rational and moral Agents, in an infinitely more perfect Manner, than in the present infirm Condition of our Nature we can do.

From what has been said, we may see that the Notions which so commonly prevail in the World, concerning the Honour, Courage, and Magnanimity of Men, are extremely ill founded. According to the general Opinion of the World, the Man of a thick, calm, and peaceable Temper, is only a low-spirited, timorous, and despicable Mortal; whereas the Persons, who from Revenge, Ambition, or Turbulency of Spirit, are ready to embroil the World, and to oppress, enslave, and plague their Neighbours, are allowed to be Men of noble Minds, High Courage, and chief Honour and Renown. But these Notions can arise only from Prejudice: In the Judgment, both of God, and of all Men of Reflection, the Man who steadily governs his Temper, and keeps all his Passions under a



due Diſcipline, is poſſeſſed of a much more noble Firmneſs of Mind, and makes a far more glorious Appearance, than the Perſons of a fierce and raſh Courage, who, notwithstanding the Boldneſs and Intrepidity with which they often encounter Dangers, are plainly defective in the moſt eſſential Part of a manly Character, the Power of Self-Government; and are carried by impotent Paſſions to Actions, which throw Reproach and Diſhonour upon their Nature. In this Caſe, therefore, of fixing our Notion of true Greatneſs of Mind there is Reaſon to appeal from the Sentence of the ignorant World, as well as there is to differ from the common Practice of Mankind in the Ways of expreſſing it.

And ſince we have ſeen that the Power of Self-Government is the true Greatneſs of Mind, and that it is the Power of Self-Government which makes a manly Character, and which is the true Greatneſs of Mind, we ſhall now ſee that it is the Power of Self-Government which makes a manly Character, and which is the true Greatneſs of Mind. And ſince we have ſeen that the Power of Self-Government is the true Greatneſs of Mind, and that it is the Power of Self-Government which makes a manly Character, and which is the true Greatneſs of Mind, we ſhall now ſee that it is the Power of Self-Government which makes a manly Character, and which is the true Greatneſs of Mind.



and added much more strength and Weight **SERM.**
~~to them than they had before. And be-~~
XII.

cause he found Religion exceedingly cor-
 rupted, and the Laws of God in a great
SERMON XII.

*The Rule of doing as we would be
 done to, explained and recom-
 mended.*

Extent of them, and to inculcate an Obe-
 dience to them according to their full Mean-
 ing and Comprehension. This was the
MATTHEW VII. 12.

*Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would
 that Men should do to you, do ye even so
 to them: For this is the Law and the
 Prophets.*

SERM. **T**HE holy Author of our Religion
XII. declared, that he *came not to de-*

stroy the Law and the Prophets; but
Matt. v. *to fulfil them:* And the Whole of his
17.

Preaching and Doctrine was a Confirmation
 of the Truth of that Assertion. He was
 so far from dissolving the Obligations which
 were laid upon Men before his Appearance,
 to observe the Precepts of the natural and
 moral Law, that on the contrary, he has
 confirmed and reinforced those Obligations,
 and

and added much more Strength and Weight SERM.
XII.
~~to them than they had before.~~ And be-

cause he found Religion exceedingly corrupted, and the Laws of God in a great Measure subverted, through the false Nations, and vain Traditions of the *Jews*; he took care to restore Religion to its original Purity, to assert and vindicate the Perfection of the Divine Laws, to clear the due Extent of them, and to inculcate an Obedience to them according to their full Meaning and Comprehension. This was the great Business of his most excellent Discourse upon the Mount, where, in Opposition to the false Comments of the *Jewish* Doctors upon the divine Commandments, he gives his own Interpretations of these Commandments, which carry human Duty to a much higher Pitch than the *Jews* had generally any Notion of, and contain some of the most sublime and important Instructions in Morality, that are any where to be met with.

Among many excellent Directions and Precepts contained in this Discourse of our Saviour, we have one in the Text, which, from the high Character which our Lord has given of it, from its great and extensive Use in Life, and from the clear Foundation

which it has in Equity and Reason, is in a
XII very particular Manner entitled to our Con-
 sideration and Regard. *Therefore, says he,*
all Things whatsoever ye would that Men
should do to you, do ye even to them. For
this is the Law and the Prophets.

The Word therefore with which this
 Precept is introduced, seems to intimate
 some Connexion between it, and the pre-
 ceding Part of our Saviour's Discourse;
 But as after all the Attempts of Commen-
 tators, it is somewhat difficult to make this
 Connexion clear and natural, I shall not, as
 it is not material, spend any Time in en-
 deavouring to fix it, but immediately pro-
 ceed to the Consideration of the important
 Maxim, which our Lord has here delivered.
 In discoursing upon which, I shall observe
 the following Method.

I. I shall inquire into the true Meaning,
 Use, and Extent of this Precept.

II. I shall consider the Character which
 our Saviour bestows upon it, when he
 says that it is *the Law and the Pro-*
phets.

III. I shall shew the great Equity of it,
 and the Obligations we are under to
 observe and obey it.

Lastly,

Lastly, I shall conclude, with some use-
ful Reflections upon the Whole.

XIX

I shall inquire into the true Meaning, Use, and Extent of this Precept. For understanding the Meaning of this Precept, we must consider that our Saviour intending in this Discourse, to inculcate a more perfect Rule of Life than was delivered by the Jewish Teachers, and laying down this Precept expressly as a Summary of the Laws of Morality, contained in the Writings of Moses and the Prophets in reference to our Neighbour, he can never be supposed to have here required any Thing that is inconsistent with the most perfect Virtue, and the strictest Performance of the several Duties of Righteousness and Charity; and therefore notwithstanding the general Terms which he uses, *All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so them*; we must not imagine that he has hereby commanded us, to gratify any unjust and unreasonable Desires and Expectations of our Neighbours, because it is possible that if we were in their Circumstances, it might please us to have such Desires and Expectations of our own gratified. A Magistrate, for Instance, is

SERM. not obliged, or authorized by this Precept,
XII. contrary to what publick Justice and the
 Safety of the Community require from him,
 to acquit a Criminal upon his earnest and
 importunate Applications to him, though
 he may think that if he himself was in the
 unhappy Condition of the Criminal, he
 might be as earnest and importunate to
 escape unpunished. Nor is it a rich Man's
 Duty by this Rule, to give away from him-
 self and his Family his Estate to a poor
 Neighbour, or to lay it out for the Support
 of idle or extravagant Men, because he
 may know that if he himself was Poor,
 or Idle, or Profuse, it would be very agree-
 able to him to have such a Support given
 to him: All Interpretations of this Precept,
 which lead to a Behaviour not reconcilea-
 ble with the Principles of Justice, and the
 good Order and Peace of Society, must
 certainly be false; because they are con-
 trary to the Foundation, and to the whole
 Design and View of it. The Things there-
 fore desired and expected by us from our
 Neighbours, which we are to make the
 Rule and Measure of our Behaviour towards
 them, must be limited to the Things which
 we rightfully desire and expect from them.
 Our Saviour prescribes this Precept upon a
 very

very just Supposition, that a Sense of Equity and fair Dealing between Man and Man is natural to our Minds, and that by a careful Exercise of our rational and moral Powers we can settle our several Rights, and discern the Claims and Demands which we have upon one another, in our various Circumstances and Relations: And the Things which we see ourselves, in any particular Cases, to be fairly entitled to from others; the Things which our Conscience and Reason, after impartial Consideration, tell us, we may in any certain Circumstances desire and demand from them; these Things, and not the Things which irregular Passions, or private Interests, would prompt us to seek, our Lord requires us, if our Neighbours be in the same, or in like Cases and Circumstances, to do to them. This is the true Sense of this Direction.

And if any one should now inquire, what is the Use of this Precept, since it only requires us to act according to our natural Sense of Equity in our Dealings with others, and to fulfil the several Obligations which we know ourselves to be under to them; and whether a plain Direction to observe always the Dictates of Equity and a good

Con-

SERMON. Conscience, in our Behaviour towards our
 XII. Neighbours, would not have been a wiser
 and better Rule, as it would have saved us
 the Trouble of substituting ourselves in the
 Place and Circumstances of others, before
 we consider what the Principles of natural
 Right and Equity oblige us to do to them,
 and fix on the Methods of conducting our-
 selves towards them? If any one, I say,
 should make this Inquiry, it may be answer-
 ed, that this Precept has a great Advantage
 above any such plain Direction, for enga-
 ging us to a just and good Conduct towards
 our Neighbours: For though Notions of
 Right and Justice are born with us, though
 whenever we judge impartially we must see
 and acknowledge the equitable and fair
 Part towards Mankind, though in almost
 all common and indifferent Cases we very
 easily and truly perceive the well-founded
 Claims which Men have upon one another;
 yet as we are made with selfish Passions as
 well as with a Sense of Equity and Human-
 ity, and as these Passions are usually very
 prevalent in us, and apt to pervert and blind
 our Judgment in Cases where our own In-
 terest is concerned; as they have frequently
 an imperceivable ill Influence even on ho-
 nest Minds, and bias them too much to
 that

that Side on which their own Advantage lies; as they hardly fail, when they produce no iniquitous Judgment or Disposition in us, to make us at least very attentive to our own Interest, and quick and sensible in discerning all our Claims and Rights; it must be of great Consequence for securing our Performance of the Duties which we owe to our Neighbours, to prevent the bad Effects which the Prejudice and Partiality occasioned by Self-love might have on our Determinations towards them, to put us into a Capacity of judging Impartially between ourselves and them, and to make us, as far as is possible, to feel for them as we do for ourselves. Now these are the Things intended by this Precept: For as it makes us in Imagination to exchange Conditions with our Neighbours, and to suppose ourselves the Persons who are to be affected with the Treatment which we give to them, we must, after this, have lost all rational Regards not only for others but for ourselves, as well as have corrupted our natural Notions of Equity, if we do not discern and admit all the fair Claims of our Neighbours, and honestly fix the Bounds of that Duty which we owe them. This Precept puts our Minds into a Situation

SERMON the most advantageous that can be for
XIII our deciding uprightly between ourselves
 and other Men, and lays a Foundation, not
 only for our keeping clear of all Injustice
 towards our Neighbour, but for our having
 almost the same lively Sense of his Rights
 and Dues, which we have of our own
 Rights, and the Obligations which he is
 under to us. An honest and steady Appli-
 cation of this Rule, would be an effectual
 Preservative of our Integrity, in all our
 Dealing and Intercourse with Mankind.

This will more clearly appear from the
 Consideration of the great Extent of this
 Rule, which is the last Point to be spoken
 to, in order to a full Explanation of it. Now
 there are not any Cases either of Justice, or
 of Charity, or arising from the various Re-
 lations in which Men stand to one another,
 which are not comprehended in this Pre-
 cept; or, in which it does not take place,
 and oblige us to our Duty.

1. This Precept extends to all Cases of
 Justice and Equity. Justice, or the ren-
 dering to all Men the Things to which
 they have a perfect and clear Right, whe-
 ther that Right arises from the Bounty of
 Nature, or is the Consequence of their own
 innocent Labour, a fair Contract, the Ap-

pointment of equal Laws, or the free Do-
 nation of others; this, I say, is so deeply
 imprinted on the Mind as a Thing invari-
 ably due to all Men, and is so necessary to
 the very Being of human Society, that
 whoever acts contrary to it in any remark-
 able Instances, will certainly be condemned
 by every one who has any Remains of Con-
 science in him, and any Regard to the
 common Interests of Mankind. Those par-
 ticularly who have their Rights and Prop-
 erties violated and invaded, will have an
 acute Sense of the Injuries which they suf-
 fer, and be apt to look upon the Authors
 of those Injuries, if they are very grievous
 and oppressive, as profligate Wretches, who
 have forfeited all Title to Protection from
 Men, and rendered themselves unworthy
 to continue Members of Society. These
 are the Sentiments which all of us feel,
 when we suffer through the Injustice of
 Men. As therefore we are very sensible of
 our own Title to just and equal Dealing
 from our Neighbours, as we think all Un-
 righteousness in regard to ourselves to be
 inconsistent with the moral Obligations
 which are naturally laid upon Mankind; and
 the greater Acts of it to be quite intolerable;
 we are bound by the Rule now under Con-

SEVENTH
 XIX

SERM. sideration to make the Case of our Neigh-

XII. bours our own, to give to them the same equitable Treatment which we claim to ourselves, and to abstain from all that Iniquity in reference to them, which, if done to ourselves, we should so much complain of.

This Precept likewise comprehends the Cases of Humanity and Charity. Tho' the Right of Men to the Offices of Humanity is not so perfect and determinate, as their Right to the Acts of Justice is, yet their Claim to them, not only in Cases of apparent Distress; but in all Cases where the Performer is put but to little or no Labour and Expence, is so very strong and obvious from the Necessity of these Offices to the Well-being and Comfort of human Life; from the natural Affections of Men uniting them in one Body, and leading them to Acts of Mercy and Kindness to one another; and from the Dictates of every Man's Conscience, teaching him that a steady Exercise of Humanity and Benevolence, is the most noble and perfect Course of Life that can be: The Claim of Men, I say, to the Offices of Compassion and Charity, is upon these Accounts so strong, that whenever they are disappointed in

In receiving them, they will certainly com-plain of those who disappoint them as Persons who have no Bowels in them, who have lost the true Spirit and Temper of Men, who at least have nothing that is generous or great in their Nature, and act very inconsistently with their Duty, as social Creatures, and moral Agents. As these, therefore, are the common Sentiments of Mankind, with respect to their Title to Acts of Humanity and Charity, it is plain that they are obliged by this Precept to the Exercise of mutual Compassion and Love; that all are to be sincerely well-affected towards the Interest of their Neighbours; and not only to sympathize with them in their Afflictions, and to support and relieve them under pressing Wants and Necessities, but to rejoice in their Welfare of all sorts, and to contribute readily to the Advancement of it; that every one should be disposed to communicate to others any innocent Joys and Satisfactions of which they are susceptible, and study to make all about him easy and happy.

3. And as this Precept thus comprehends the Cases of Justice and Equity, and of Mercy and Charity, so also all the Cases arising from the various Relations of Man-

B b

kind,

SERM. kind, and obliges them to the Duties in-
 XX. cumbent on them in their respective Sta-
 tions. For as upon very little Considera-
 tion they must see that some of these Rela-
 tions have been wisely formed by Nature,
 and others of them have been introduced
 by Men, for securing and encreasing the
 Happiness of Society; so for making these
 Relations answer their End, certain Duties
 are necessary to be performed by those who
 are related to one another, which are very
 well known, and are always justly claimed
 and expected by Men, in their several Re-
 lations, as their Due. Thus whether they
 be Parents or Children, Governors or Sub-
 jects, Masters or Servants, or in whatever
 other Relation they stand to one another,
 they all know what Persons in each Rela-
 tion expect and are entitled to from their
 Correlatives; that Parents expect to be re-
 verenced and honoured by their Children,
 and that Children have a Right to be care-
 fully and tenderly educated, and provided
 for, by their Parents; that Governors and
 Masters look for Submission, Obedience,
 and Fidelity from their Subjects and Ser-
 vants; and that Subjects and Servants may
 fairly claim Protection, and just, equal, and
 kind Usage from their Governors and Mas-

ters. They are therefore bound by this Rule to render to all to whom they are related, that which they know may be reasonably expected by them, and which they themselves, if they had exchanged Situations with them, would think they might lay claim to. So that this Precept extends to all Cases in which Men are concerned with one another, and obliges all to the several Duties which they owe to their Neighbours.

II. I proceed to consider the Character which our Saviour bestows upon this Precept, when he says that it is *the Law and the Prophets*. Now this Character may comprehend these two Things, which are both very plain with respect to this Rule.

1. That it pursues and promotes the great Design of the *Law and the Prophets*.
2. That it is the Sum or Abridgment of them, so far as they relate to the Duties which we owe to our Neighbours.

1. This Precept pursues and promotes the great Design of the *Law and the Prophets*. By the Law and the Prophets we are plainly to understand that System of Religion, which is to be found in the Writings of *Moses*, and the other sacred Books

SERM. of the Old Testament: And it is certain
 XII. that though that Religion was burthened
 with a Multitude of external Rites, and
 pompous ceremonious Services, yet these
 were always Things of the least Value in
 it, and enjoined, not for their own Sake,
 but for preserving the *Jews* from the Ido-
 latry and other Corruptions of the *Heathens*,
 and keeping them stedfast in the Worship
 of the one true God, and the Performance
 of the other important Duties required from
 them. The Prophets therefore every where
 make a Distinction between the ceremonial
 and moral Parts of Religion, and always
 give the Preference to the latter; declaring
 Justice and Integrity, Mercy and Charity
 in our Conversation with Mankind, and a
 humble and reverent Behaviour towards
 God, to be the Qualifications which God
 principally regarded in his Servants, and
 absolutely necessary to entitle Men to the
 divine Favour, and that without them, no
 external Performances whatsoever would
 be at all accepted. And according to these
 Declarations which we meet with in the
 Old Testament itself, concerning the Na-
 ture and Design of true Religion, our Sa-
 viour, who was the best Interpreter of the
 divine Laws, has told us, that the weigh-
 tier

tier Matters of the *Law*, or of the Jewish Religion, were the Virtues of *Justice*, *Faithfulness*, *Mercy*, and the *Love of God*.

And that to love God with all the *Heart*, and *Soul*, and *Mind*, was the first and great Commandment; and to love Mankind, was the second like unto it; and that on these two Commandments hanged all the *Law* and the *Prophets*: These two Rules contained

Matt. xxiii. 23.
Luke xi. 42.
Matt. xxii. 37—40.

the Substance of all that was truly good in the Religion of the *Jews*, and for explaining and enforcing these, all the Revelations which God had made to that People, were chiefly and ultimately intended. As this Precept therefore requires so strictly, and lays so good a Foundation for our practising all social Duties, it is evident that it is a great Reinforcement of the *Law*, and has the same Things in View, which were designed by *Moses* and the *Prophets*.

2. This Precept is the Sum or Abridgment of the *Law* and the *Prophets*, so far as they relate to the Duties which we owe to our Neighbours. Whatever Commandments were delivered by *Moses*, and whatever Directions we meet with in the Books of the ancient *Prophets*, with respect to the Duties which Men owe to one another, are all reducible to, and virtually compre-

SERMON. ended in this Precept. *The whole Law,*

XII. as St. Paul speaks, *is fulfilled in this Saying,* all Things whatsoever ye would that
 Rom. xiii. 9.

Men should do to you, do ye even so to them; as well as in that other Saying, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, as thyself.* Indeed considering the Inadvertence and Inattention of Mankind, and the Prejudices and Corruptions which usually prevail among them, it is very necessary that every Branch of their Duty be particularly explained to them, and earnestly inculcated upon them: But yet it is certain, that whoever truly understands and practises this one general Rule in the full Extent of it, will not stand in need of any particular Instructions as to his Conduct towards his Neighbours, or be wanting to any of those Obligations which he lies under to them. But this being abundantly evident from what has been discoursed under the former Head, I shall not here insist any farther upon it.

III. I go on now to shew the great Equity of this Precept, and the Obligations which we are under to observe and obey it.

As to the Equity of it: This is a Thing so very apparent, that few Words will be
 sufficient

sufficient to illustrate it: For Mankind being all Creatures of the same Species, partaking of a common Nature, and born to the same Privileges and Advantages; it is plain, that where no Diversity of Circumstances, makes a Difference in the Duties which they owe to one another, they must be reciprocally the Objects of the same Affections and Regards. Superior Merit will always entitle its Possessors to a peculiar Degree of Respect and Honour; and either natural or political Relations, will oblige those who are joined in these Relations, to a different Conduct towards each other; and a great Variety of particular Cases in which Men may be, may require as great a Variety in our Ways of acting towards them: But after due Allowances have been made for these Differences of Circumstances and Relations, the natural Equality of Men is a clear Foundation for every Man's treating his Neighbour in the same Manner in which he can justly desire to be treated by him. So that this Rule of *doing as we would be done to*, is the most impartial and fair that can be. And indeed in the Equity of it, every Man's Conscience naturally acquiesces. This is a Maxim which all Men who have professed

SERM. to have any Notions of Morality, or of
 XII. a *Right* or a *Wrong* in Life, have ever
 agreed in: It has been universally assented
 to by People of all Ages, Nations, and Re-
 ligions. Even Persons of the meanest Ca-
 pacities can discern the Equity of it, and
 therefore complain of injurious, or unkind
 Treatment, when in regard to themselves
 it is broken through.

Thus the great Equity of this Rule ap-
 pears; which alone might be sufficient to
 convince us that we are strictly bound to
 obey it: For all Mankind are plainly sub-
 ject to the Law of natural Right and Equity,
 from the very Constitution of their Beings,
 antecedently to the Consideration of its be-
 ing the positive Will of a Lawgiver, and to
 an Expectation of Benefit and Reward from
 the Observance of it; and no one, who has
 not extremely corrupted himself, can ever
 transgress this Law, without giving a Wound
 to his own Heart, and being conscious of
 great Baseness and Depravity. But yet be-
 cause the evil Desires and Passions of Men,
 are frequently so strong, as to incline them
 to do Things contrary to the clearest Right,
 it may be necessary to insist also upon some
 other Arguments, which farther shew us,
 why we should obey this Rule.

10. And *first*, Let us consider that it is **SERM.**
the Commandment of our blessed Saviour, **XII.**
and a principal Part of his Religion. He
here enjoins it most strictly on all his Dis-
ciples, declaring it to be not only among
the weightier Precepts of the Law of God,
but the Sum and Substance of one whole
Table of it. It is an essential Branch of
true Religion, without the Practice of which,
all our Pretences to the Name of Christians,
will be utterly vain. The great Design of
our Lord in that Religion which he insti-
tuted, was to revive and restore the Law
of Nature, and to heighten and improve
all moral Obligations to the utmost. He
therefore every where exacts from his Fol-
lowers, the Practice of all the great moral
Virtues, and particularly those Virtues of
Righteousness, Mercy, Charity, and the
like, which are comprehended in this ge-
neral Rule: All these are most indispen-
sably required of Christians, and some of
them are made the distinguishing Badges,
and the Characteristicks of our holy Profes-
sion. And therefore as ever we would ap-
prove ourselves the true Disciples of *Jesus*
Christ, and answer the End of that Reli-
gion which he has published to the World,
it

SERM. it concerns us with all Care and Diligence
 XII. to observe this Precept.

2. Let us farther consider of what great Use the Observation of this Rule would be, in regard both of publick Societies, and particular Persons.

(1.) In regard of publick Societies: Nothing could be more beneficial to these, than a punctual Observation of this excellent Precept. If it was as duly practised, as it is strictly enjoined, it would soon introduce into the World, the most glorious and happy State that can be imagined. It would at once put an End to all injurious and fraudulent Dealings, to all oppressive and rigorous Practices, to all the ruinous Designs of Ambition, the Insolence of Pride, and the mean Arts of Covetousness; it would kill all the Seeds of Envy, *Bitterness and Wrath, Anger and Malice*, in the Hearts of Men: It would, on the contrary, raise among Mankind a Spirit of universal Justice and Benevolence; it would open and enlarge their Souls towards one another, making them not only fair and upright, but humane, friendly, and generous, gentle and condescending in their whole Behaviour: It would engage all to the Duties which they owed to others in their several States

States and Relations, and in a Word, would make every one as truly concerned to promote the Interest of his Neighbour, as he is to promote his own. And what a happy Thing would human Society then be, when all the Members of it dealt thus equitably and kindly with one another! How truly good and pleasant would it be to behold Men living together in such a State! In this Event we should find a full Accomplishment of the ancient Prophecies concerning the Prosperity and Peace which are to prevail in the Reign of the *Messiah*, when we are told, *the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, the young Lion and the Fatling shall lie down together, and a little Child shall lead them; and there shall be nothing to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy Mountain; when all the Iniquity, Fierceness, and Inhumanity of Men's Tempers shall be entirely subdued, when Truth, Peace, and Love shall dwell in every Breast, and an universal Tranquillity spread itself over the Face of the Earth.* Of such great Consequence would the Practice of this Rule be, for promoting and establishing the Happiness of Society. As ever therefore we would contribute to the general Good of Mankind, which is our great and most indispensable Duty,

Isaiah xi.
6, 9.

SERMON Duty, and which all generous Minds will
XII readily take every Opportunity of doing; we
 should endeavour by our own Example to
 recommend this Precept to the universal
 Observation and Practice of the World.

(2.) In regard of particular Persons, the
 Observance of this Rule would be likewise
 very beneficial. The Advantages which it
 would afford to these are many: I shall
 take Notice only of one or two of the most
 considerable. And first, it would procure
 them the Esteem and Confidence of Man-
 kind. This will be very well known to all
 Men of Experience and Practice in the
 World, who must be sensible how much a
 Man of an approved and established Cha-
 racter for Integrity and Humanity, who
 is so far from injuring others, that he al-
 ways deals kindly and courteously with
 them, as he would wish to be dealt with
 himself, is honoured, valued, and readily
 trusted by all who know him; while, on
 the other hand, a Man of the opposite
 Character is despised, detested, and aban-
 doned by all the World. Secondly, it
 would contribute greatly to their inward
 Serenity and Peace. A Violation of this
 Rule, in any gross Instances, if it be not
 accompanied with a Hardness of Heart, or

an Insensibility to all the Notions of Virtue SERM.
and Honour, which is itself extreme Wretch- XII.
edness, must be always followed with an
Uneasiness and Disturbance of Mind. For
Acts of Iniquity are so contrary to the Con-
stitution of our Nature, that it is impos-
sible that they should ever be committed by
a Man, who retains any of the common
Sentiments and Principles of Humanity,
without his condemning himself, and his
feeling an inward Anguish and Remorse.
On the contrary, a strict Regard to this
Precept would not only free us from this
Self-Condernation, and all the Pain which
arises upon it, but would likewise be a sure
and perpetual Source of Joy and Comfort
to us: That upright, equitable, and cha-
ritable Temper which this Rule designs to
form and increase in us, will give us a pure
and constant Pleasure of Self-Approbation,
and be a good Evidence both of our loving
God, and our being loved by him. The
Consciousness of it will add much to our
Happiness in all Conditions and Circum-
stances; it will heighten our Relish of the
Blessings of Prosperity, it will revive and
enliven us in Adversity, it will be our great
Support in the Article of Death, and make
us with a humble Confidence to conclude,
that

SERMON. that whenever we leave this World, we shall

XII. find ourselves in a more perfect and a better State. *The Work of Righteousness shall be*

Isaiah

xxxii.

17. *Peace, says the Prophet, and the Effect of*

xxxii. 17.

Righteousness, Quietness, and Assurance for

ever: Mark the Perfect, and behold the

Psalms

xxxvii.

37. *Upright, says the Psalmist, for the End of*

xxxvii. 37.

that Man is Peace.

I shall now conclude with some Reflections on what has been discoursed.

1. We may see the great Wisdom and Goodness of God appearing in this Precept, which is so accommodated to the Constitution of human Nature, and so conducive to the true Interest and Good of Mankind. The Whole of Religion is indeed a *reasonable Service*, perfectly agreeable to the calmest and most natural Sentiments of our Minds, and admirably contrived for conferring on us the greatest and most lasting Benefits: But some Laws of Religion more particularly and visibly carry the Marks of the Divine Wisdom and Mercy of their great Author; among which this must be accounted one, which is so extremely just and equitable, that every Man, who has any Remains of Conscience in him, must immediately approve it; and which, if duly observed, would be a most plentiful

plentiful Spring both of publick and private SER. M.
 Happiness. This Precept, therefore, being XII.
 so large and comprehensive a Branch of
 the Christian Institution, is a strong Proof
 of the Easiness and Gentleness of our Sa-
 viour's Yoke, and of the Excellency of his
 Religion, not only above the Superstitions
 which prevail in *those dark Places of the* Psal. lxxiv.
Earth, which, in the Language of the Psal-
mist, are full of the Habitations of Cruelty;
 but even above that Scheme of Religion
 which God thought fit to give to the Jews,
 which, notwithstanding the good Design of
 it, and the many excellent Rules which it
 contained, abounded with *Statutes which* Ezek. xx.
were not good, and Judgments by which Men 25.
could not live, that is, Laws, which had no
 intrinsic Goodness to recommend them,
 and which, instead of promoting the Ease
 and Pleasure of the Observers of them, were
 rather oppressive and burthensome. This is
 not the Case as to the Religion of the Gos-
 pel: Even the positive Precepts of it are all
 prudently enjoined, and of an apparent good
 Tendency and Use; and the great moral
 Laws of it are so plainly adapted to our Na-
 ture, and so immediately subservient to our
 Welfare, that they must effectually con-
 vince us of the wise and kind Intention of
 him

SER. him who imposed these Laws upon Man-

XII. kind; particularly this Precept, which contains half of the practical Part of Christianity, is so very reasonable in itself, and so happily calculated for the Benefit of the World, that it must satisfy us, that God is far from being a severe or hard Master; that he has not dealt with us in the way of mere Power or Arbitrariness, but that he has shewn himself by his Laws, to be both our gracious Parent and just Governor; who designs nothing more by the Obedience which he requires from us, than our own Happiness.

2. We may hence learn, what false and unworthy Representations of Christianity those Persons give us, who in their Accounts of it, omit or set but little Value on the moral Duties and social Virtues, which Men are to practise towards one another. This is certainly to give us a very different Notion of Religion, from that which has been delivered by *Jesus Christ*, and his Apostles; who have most plainly and constantly in all their Discourses, declared the uniform Practice of Morality, including the Duties of a rational Piety towards God, as well as Acts of Righteousness and Humanity towards Men, to be the Substance and

End

End of Religion, to which all other Things SERM.
in the Christian Institution, are only pre- XII.
paratory and subservient. But notwith-
standing this is a Point so clear in the New
Testament, *that he who runs may read it*;
and notwithstanding that the Doctrine of
our Saviour and the Apostles upon this Sub-
ject, is most apparently reasonable in itself,
there have been many, some of whom have
been so vainly conceited of their own Dis-
cernment in Religion, as to despise or
pity the Ignorance of all who have not
thought like themselves, who have depre-
ciated Morality, who have looked upon
the Virtues of Justice, Charity, Meekness,
and the like, as Qualities which perhaps
might have been commendable in *Heathens*,
but which are but little deserving of the
Attention and Zeal of Christians, and who
have placed the Essence of their Religion,
in inward Raptures, Communications, and
Impressions; or in a Course of great Mor-
tification and Abstraction from the World,
and an assiduous Attendance on the outward
Performances of Devotion; or in great
Zeal against Error, and for maintaining
what they call the Purity of Faith; or per-
haps in a strong Confidence in the Merits
of *Christ*, to save them from the Guilt and

SERM. Punishment of their Sins, though they are

NH. at no Pains to be delivered from their Power

and Dominion. These Notions of Christ-

tianity may possibly, in some, take their

Rise merely from a strong Enthusiasm, per-

verting their Judgment, and shutting out all

Means of better Information; while in

others, they proceed in a great measure

from a corrupt Disposition of Heart, which

makes them glad to embrace any Schemes

of Religion, which will secure them a Li-

berty of indulging their vicious Inclinations

in this World, consistently with their en-

tertaining the Hopes of Happiness in the

next. But in whatever way we are to ac-

count for such Opinions, it is plain that

they are utterly false, and most dishonou-

rable and injurious to the Gospel, which

indeed makes no Account of any thing in

comparison of moral Duties, and is famous

above all other Institutions for urging and

establishing them upon the most noble and

solid Principles; and which has not left

the least Room to any Man to imagine

himself to be in a State of Favour with

God, and entitled to future Happiness upon

any Foundation, but the Practice of uni-

versal Righteousness.

3. Lastly,

3. Lastly, Since this Precept bears so great a Character, and is of such a high Rank and Importance in Christianity, and is withal so very equitable in itself, how guilty and inexcusable must those Men be, who are notoriously defective in the Observation of it, and shew by their Actions that they have but little or no Regard to it at all? And how many are there in the World, and even among the professed Disciples of our Saviour, who thus despise and neglect this great and important Law; who are so far from treating their Neighbours in the fair and humane Way prescribed by it, that they give them Cause to complain of Injustice or Unkindness, in, perhaps, most of the Instances of their Conduct towards them; who instead of cultivating an impartial lively Sense of the several Rights and Claims of their Brethren, are full of base narrow Views, and always ready to improve whatever Advantages the Ignorance or Weakness of others may give them for their own Profit, and to lay hold on any little Circumstances which they may find in Law for evading the most equitable Obligations? But how can any ever pretend to be the Followers of our blessed Saviour, who transgress so grossly this essential Pre-

SERM. cept of his Religion; whose Practices are

XII. so far from being worthy of *Christians*, that

they would have been a Reproach to any

Heathens, and will certainly be detested by

all who have any Generosity or Honesty of

Mind in them. Such Persons may value

themselves, if they think fit, upon their

Faith, their Knowledge, their Zeal, their

Devotion, and other Attainments in Re-

ligion; but while their Conduct is so con-

tradictory to this excellent Rule, all their

Faith, all their Religion is certainly vain.

It is well known, how highly one of the

Heathen Emperors revered this Precept,

and how careful he was to engage all about

him to the Practice of it; and without all

Doubt, the Behaviour of many, who have

had no better Guide than the Light of their

own Minds, will be the Condemnation of

Multitudes of degenerate Christians, who

in the common Duties of Morality, have

fallen far short of those, whom perhaps they

have despised, as poor blind *Heathens*, not-

withstanding that the Gospel has given us

the greatest Advantages for performing these

Duties, and makes the highest Account of

them, and exacts the Practice of them with

the utmost Severity.

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S E R M O N XIII.

The Love of our Country, explained, illustrated, and enforced.

PSALM cxxii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy Walls, and Prosperity within thy Palaces. For my Brethren and Companions Sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.

IN these Words the Psalmist recommends the Cultivation of one of the most noble and becoming Affections, that have any Place in the human Heart, a Love of our Country, or of that Community or Society of which we are Members; and excites us to it, by Considerations of the greatest Weight and Importance. The Method in which he directs us to cultivate

SERMON. **III.** cultivate this Affection, is by praying to God for the Peace and Prosperity of our Country; by begging of the Governor of the Universe, who sits at the Helm, guiding and conducting all the Affairs of the World, that he would, in Ways consistent with the Purposes of his own most wise and righteous Administration, effect and establish the Quiet and Welfare of our national Community; Which Act of Praying to God for the Happiness of our Country, as it presupposes a sincere Love of our Country prevailing in our Hearts, since it would be both the greatest Profaneness, and most impudent Hypocrisy, to pretend to express in our Addresses to the great Searcher of Hearts, and Judge of our whole Conduct, any Sentiments and Affections which we do not perceive and feel within us; so it is a most excellent Means of improving and increasing this Affection. The Habits of all Virtues arise out of the repeated Acts and Exercises of the Virtues themselves; and the Exercise of virtuous Affections, in solemn Acts of Devotion, and under an immediate lively Sense of the Presence and Inspection of the Deity, must have a mighty Efficacy, above all other Ways of expressing and exerting such Affections,

for

for raising and strengthening them in our Minds, if we have any just and becoming Apprehensions of the Excellence and Dignity of the Divine Nature. The offering our Prayers, therefore, for the Prosperity of the Publick, with Understanding and Seriousness, is plainly an admirable Expedient for forming and heightening a Temper of Good-will and Love towards it in us. Besides that this Practice, if we attend to it with Judgment, must draw forth our Love of our Country into all those Actions, by which we can contribute to its Interest and Welfare; as it is one necessary Condition of our praying acceptably and successfully, that we do whatever is in our own Power for obtaining the Blessings which we ask from God.

The Motives by which the Psalmist excites us thus to cultivate an Affection to the Publick, are of great Force, and very much deserve our Attention. The first is contained in these Words; *they shall prosper that love thee.* By a sincere and zealous Attachment to the Interest of the Community, we shall consult our own Advantage and Welfare. A Love of our Country, though it is one of the most generous and disinterested of all Affections, yet when it

SERVOIS is steady, strong, and active in a Man, it
 never fails to be likewise the Source of his
 private Good and Happiness. For besides
 that the Exercise of this Affection, and Re-
 flections upon it, always afford him the
 most noble and divine Pleasures, it is such
 a reputable and engaging Quality, that it
 must necessarily procure him great and uni-
 versal Respect and Love. It may very pos-
 sibly be the Means of advancing him to
 some Station of Dignity and Honour in the
 Society of which he deserves so well, and
 must at least raise him up many Admirers
 and Friends, who will be zealously con-
 cerned for his Interest, who will stand by
 him in his greatest Dangers and Difficul-
 ties, and be even ready to expose them-
 selves, if it were necessary, for his Defence
 and Safety. St. Paul has observed, that
 for a good Man, for one who has been
 eminently useful and serviceable to the
 World, one would even dare to die; and
 the Observation is very justly founded, and
 sufficiently confirmed by the Experience of
 Men: There is, certainly, Generosity and
 Gratitude enough in many Men, to make
 them chearfully sacrifice all their worldly
 Interests, and even Life itself, for the Pre-
 servation of a Patriot, if that could be the
 Means

Rom. v.

7.

Means of delivering him. The second Argument suggested by the Psalmist, for the Cultivation of a publick Spirit, is expressed in these Words, *For my Brethren and Companions Sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.* In the Safety and Security of the Publick, the whole temporal Felicity of our dearest Friends, Associates, and Dependants is involved. Where there is no Publick, no Government established upon just and equal Principles, but the Affairs of a great Multitude of Men, either lie in Confusion, or, are subject to merelawless Power, all the Possessions and Advantages of Life are rendered quite precarious, must be frequently ravished and taken away from a Man, and can at best yield him, if he has any Notion and Taste of Liberty, but a flat and insipid Pleasure. Whoever, therefore, has the social, generous, and benevolent Affections strong within him; whoever feels the Force of the Ties of Kindred and Friendship, *Relations dear, and all the Charities of Father, Son, and Brother,* must be naturally alarmed and and shocked at the Apprehensions of such a State of Society, as would constantly threaten both himself, and all to whom he is united by the tenderest Bonds, with the
Ruin

See the Ruin of all their Happiness in this World,

XIII and be most anxiously concerned for the

Support of a Constitution, which is necessary to protect and preserve his own Liberties and Properties, and likewise those of the Persons, whose Interests are altogether of as much Value and Importance to him as his own. The last Motive by which a Love of the Publick is recommended by the Psalmist, is thus expressed, *Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.* Where there is a wise and good Constitution of the political Body, care will be always taken to protect Men in the Exercise of Religion, to secure them a full Liberty of worshipping God according to the Dictates of their Consciences, and of disciplining and improving their Minds in the Practice of all Virtue; and to furnish those, who want it, and are willing to make use of it, with Direction, or Assistance for doing these Things to the best Advantage. And as these are the greatest Benefits which Men can enjoy, being the Means not only of their highest Felicity in this World, but of their everlasting Life in a future State, they must, if they judge and act rationally, be most zealously attached to the Constitution,

But

tion, which effectually secures and affords *Sec 8 M.*
 to them such an ineffable Happiness. *XIII*

Having thus opened up the View and
 Intention of the Psalmist in this Passage, I
 shall now proceed to make two or three
 Observations, which will naturally arise
 from it, and explain, illustrate, and im-
 prove them a little, in their Order.

1. We may observe, that the Love of a
 Community, or Country, is an Affection,
 which may be naturally expected to prevail
 in every good Mind. The Psalmist here
 supposes every honest Heart to be full of
 this Affection, and ready to pour it out in
 the solemn Addresses, which it sends up to
 Heaven. And indeed, if we consider the
 Nature of this Affection, and the strong
 Inducements which Men have to cultivate
 it, we may easily apprehend, that no Per-
 son, who has any Pretence to a worthy
 Character, can ever be destitute of it. A
 Love of our Nation or Country, is one of
 the most excellent and honourable Dispo-
 sitions of which our Hearts are capable.
 Every benevolent Affection whatsoever, has
 a Loveliness and Worth, which in some
 Degree recommends it to our Consciences,
 and gains our Approbation and Esteem:

But

SERM. But the more calm, strong, and extensive

XIII. any benevolent Affections are, the greater

their Excellence and Worth appears to be, and the more do they command our Approbation and Love. This is a Fact, of the Truth of which, every one may be convinced, by his Reflections on himself, and his Observations on the Tempers of other Men. The calm and steady Love of Mankind in general therefore, the earnest Desire of the Happiness of all rational Creatures, who can partake of it, is certainly the most noble and worthy Principle, on which we can act towards the Creation of God, and raises us up, in the highest Degree in which we are capable of such a Thing, to a Participation of the Dignity and Glory of the Creator himself. Next to this, in Point of Excellence and Merit, is the Love of some particular large Society or Community of Men, especially if it be well formed and calculated, not only for promoting its own common Interests, but for contributing to the Happiness of a considerable Part of the World around it: The Love of our Country, in this View of it, is plainly a Passion worthy of the most generous and heroick Souls, and is withal a Thing which we are so directly led into,

by

by our social Instincts and Propensions, by SER. II.
the Attractions of Friendship and natural XIII.
Affection, by our Desires of Liberty, and
those other Advantages which exalt and
adorn our Nature, and which are to be
enjoyed only in a well constituted civil
State, that it seems to be quite impossible
that a Mind, which is capable of being
struck with the Appearances of moral Beau-
ty, and has any good Dispositions moving
within it, should not feel, at least in some
Measure, the Force and Influence of this
Affection. It is certain that the natural
Sentiments and Feelings of Mankind, have
always determined them to make a great
Account of this Virtue; and therefore we
find that there are no Actions, which have
been more highly celebrated in History, or
are still contemplated with more Admira-
tion and Applause, than those which have
proceeded from publick Spirit, and Zeal
for one's Country. And it is likewise cer-
tain that this Affection is perfectly agreea-
ble to the Spirit of true Religion, which is
a Thing so evident, that it would hardly
have been necessary to have remarked it,
had it not been pretended, that Religion,
as it appears in its most perfect Form in
the Gospel, lays no Stress upon the Love
of

SERMON of our Country, and gives no Countenance
XIII and Encouragement to Men in the Practice
 of this Duty: Which is, surely, as ground-
 less an Objection as was ever insinuated
 against the Religion of our Saviour; since
 the great, or whole Design of it, is to in-
 spire and inculcate a Temper of universal
 Good-will and Love; which in the first
 Place, must unite us closely to the most
 important and widely extended Commu-
 nity of all rational Agents, of which God
 himself is the Father and Governor; which
 must likewise prompt us to promote the
 common Interest of Mankind, so far as it
 falls under our Influence, without a regard
 to the Distinctions of Nation and Country,
 Faith and Religion; and which must af-
 terwards make us to consult the Happiness
 of particular Societies of Men, and of In-
 dividuals, according to the Relations in
 which we stand to them, and the various
 Degrees of Amiability which are to be
 found in them, in which the Duty which
 we owe to our Country is undoubtedly in-
 cluded: So that if any Man falls short in
 the Regards which are due from him to
 the political Society of which he is a Mem-
 ber, he offends as much against the Law
 of Christianity, as against the Dictates of
 Conscience,

Conscience, and the Law of his own Nature. SERM. XIII.

The Use which we are to make of this Observation, is first to convince us of the Absurdity and Wickedness of those Attempts which have been made, to explode all publick Spirit, to turn the very Notion of it into a Jest, to persuade us that Mankind are at bottom governed by nothing but some low and meanly selfish Principles, and that their most plausible Pretences to the Love of their Country, and their Kind, are but Delusion, or Affectation. This is a Scheme so contrary to the common Perceptions and Feelings of our Minds, and the most obvious Appearances in human Nature, and has such a dreadful Aspect upon the Affairs of Society, that we may justly conclude that the Persons who are fond of it and propagate it, at best labour under most wretched Prejudices, and the strangest Confusion of Thought; if they do not rather speak (which in most Instances is probably the Case) from a Consciousness of the Want of the generous Principles of Patriotism and publick Virtue in Themselves, which, therefore, in their own Defence, they endeavour to vilify and ridicule in all others.

But

SERM.

XIII.

But the principal Improvement which we are to make of the Observation, is to cultivate and exert, with great Care, this generous Affection of Love to our Country, which is so necessary an ingredient in every worthy Character. In our Professions and common Discourses, many of us seem indeed to have Ambition enough to be esteemed Patriots, or Persons sincerely concerned for the Safety, Interest, and Honour of our Country; and to be truly entitled to this Character, would certainly be a most noble and honourable Distinction. But it is not so easily attained to, as we are, perhaps, apt to think it is: Patriotism, in the highest and most conspicuous Degrees, is plainly out of the Reach of most Men; since to this there is necessary, not only a most upright and disinterested Disposition of Heart, but a large and sagacious Mind, able to form great and comprehensive Schemes for the publick Welfare, and to point out and pursue the Measures proper for rendering them effectual. But even the lower Degrees of the Patriot-Character are not to be attained to by mere Words and Wishes, or even by some Exertions and Fits of Zeal for the Interest and Reputation of our Country, upon Occasion of national Injuries

juries and Affronts. If we would really SERM.
merit the Character of Friends and Lovers XIII.
of our Country, we must have an habitual In-
tention, and fixed Disposition to promote the
Good of it, by all the Means in our Power;
be so far from being influenced by any for-
did, or private Considerations to betray or
hurt it, that we must be ever ready to sa-
crifice Life, Fortune, and every thing that
is most valuable to us in this World, for
its Defence and Security, and faithfully
employ any Talents and Advantages which
we have, for adding somewhat to the Stock
of common Happiness. It is certain, that
in this Case, a great deal more may be ex-
pected from some than others, in Propor-
tion to their superior Abilities for abound-
ing in Acts of Generosity and publick Be-
neficence: The Persons of the first Cha-
racter for Wisdom, Authority, Rank, and
Influence in a Nation, must always, if they
would shine as Patriots, and acquit them-
selves like Men of Virtue and true Good-
ness, watch and labour most eminently for
the common Good, and look upon their
Pre-eminence in Society, not as an Exemp-
tion from those Cares, which are above
all others, worthy of Men, but as an Obli-
gation to attend to them with greater Zeal

SERMON and Affiduity. These more especially, should charge themselves with looking after the most important Concerns of the Community; the Preservation, or Improvement of the Constitution; the Security of Liberty and Religion; the Establishment and Support of equal Laws; the Encouragement of Arts and Sciences, Trade, and Manufactures; and the giving full Scope to the Powers of the human Mind, to unfold and exert themselves, in all those Ways, which tend either to the Safety, Strength, and Profit of Society, or to the Convenience, Elegance, and Ornament of Life. But all other Men, whatever their Situation and Rank may be, must likewise, if they would be thought to have any Generosity of Heart, and any Principles of Virtue in them, contribute their Part to the common Interest of their Country, in those Methods, in which their Talents enable them severally, to serve it most effectually; some, by undertaking a liberal Profession, or any Office of Consequence to the Publick, and performing the Duties belonging to them with Diligence and Integrity; others by applying themselves to Agriculture, or any useful Branch of Commerce or Business; all, by setting an Example of Industry.

Tem-

explained, illustrated, and enforced.

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Temperance, Justice, Fortitude of Mind, *Stam*
Piety, and all Virtue, which, as it is in *XIII*
the Power of Persons in the meanest Con-
dition, so it is a Thing of such absolute
Necessity to the true and lasting Prosperity
of any Nation, that without it, the highest
Pretences which any can make to publick
Spirit, must, at best, be very awkward and
preposterous.

2. I proceed now to another Observa-
tion, which arises from the Passage before
us, which is, that *in the Idea of a Country*
which is the Object of our Affection, a wisely
concerted Scheme of Policy, or a justly framed
civil Constitution is included. The Psalmist,
as is sufficiently evident from this Psalm
itself, saw that there was such a Scheme or
Constitution in the *Commonwealth of Israel*,
which united the Society in one Body, and
secured the Rights, Liberties, and Posses-
sions of the several Members of it, and pro-
vided for the just and prudent Administra-
tion of all Affairs of Consequence to them;
and this was plainly the Foundation of the
Zeal and Affection which he here expresses
for his Country. And it is certain, that
something of this Sort is essential to the
Notion of a Country, and the only Ground
of our entertaining a rational and manly

SERMON Affection towards it. The being born in a certain District of the Earth, the breathing in the Air of a particular Climate, and the living among a Multitude of Men, held together, perhaps under one Head, not however by any Union or Confederacy founded in Principles of Reason, and aiming at their common Interest and Benefit, but by mere Force, or the Terror of an Oppressor and Tyrant, can never give a Man of Reflection, the Idea of his standing in any Relation to a Country. The only rational Ends for which Men associate in great Numbers, or form themselves into large Bodies or Communities, besides the Gratification of their social Affections, are the protecting themselves from the Outrage and Violence, to which they are subject in a State of natural Freedom, and the securing more effectually than they otherwise could, the Enjoyment of their Lives, Properties, and Liberties; and in order to their being a People or Nation, and having what may be justly accounted and regarded by them, as a Commonwealth or Country, Provision must be made for this Improvement of their Condition, by some well devised Constitutions and Orders of the Society, or some wise settled Plan of Polity and Government.

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vernment. There is indeed such a Stock SERM.
of social Affection in the Hearts of Men, **XIII.**
as often makes them to unite and cling to-
gether, with all the Love which could
proceed from the Relation of Countrymen
and Fellow-Citizens, merely from some
such Circumstances, as were mentioned be-
fore, which can never constitute that Re-
lation; and there is usually such a natural
Anticipation in their Minds, of the Ne-
cessity of publick Order and Government,
that many of them pay great Respect and
Submission to any Schemes, that have the
Appearance of introducing, or preserving
Order among them, however, little fitted
they may be to promote the true Happiness
of a social State. But this proceeds only
from their following rashly the first Mo-
tions and Impulses of Nature, without em-
ploying their rational Faculties to prepare
the Way for the just and becoming Exercise
of their Affections. Whoever of them will
be at Pains to consider and reflect, will
soon find, that to produce a strong Affection
and Attachment to any Society of Men,
which can be deliberately approved, or jus-
tified, there must be something social and
moral in the Constitution of the Society,
some Scheme or Plan of Power established

SUM. among them, which is, visibly, calculated
XIII. for the general Interest of the whole Community, and so far as is consistent with that, for the Happiness of every individual Member of it; and that to make any Man with Reason to look upon himself as a Part or Member of this Society, and to interest himself as a Fellow-Citizen in the Affairs of it, he must have a Share in the common Benefits and Privileges resulting from the Constitution, and be able under the Protection of it, to pursue any innocent Happiness for himself, and to do all the Good which he may be capable of, to his Dependants, Friends, and Neighbours.

From what has been said upon this Head, we may first, see the wretched and pitiable Situation of the Men, who have nothing that can be properly called a civil State, or a Country, among them; and who yet are put upon Services more than would be necessary to render a real Country flourishing and happy, perhaps merely to satisfy the Will of an imperious Master, to raise the Glory of a *Grand Monarque*, or to swell the Pride of some vain Mortal, who most insolently assumes a Power which the Deity himself does not claim, of trampling upon the Rights of Humanity, and debasing the noble

noble Faculties with which Mankind are formed, to serve the Purposes of vile, mean, and despicable Passions. Now this is the Case, wherever arbitrary Power, in whatsoever Form administered, prevails, and without the Controul of Law, or Reason, disposes as it pleases, of the Lives, Liberties, Fortunes, and all the Affairs of those who are subject to it. And however the Men who live in this State do not seem to be always much affected with the Vassalage and Ignominy in which they are held; nay, however some of them may boast of Things, as their Honour and Happiness, which are really the Badges, or Consequences of their Servitude and Misery; yet all who have a true Generosity of Spirit, and know the Prerogatives of human Nature, and what Privileges and Advantages Mankind are born to, must have a deep Sense of the miserable Lowness and Baseness of such a Condition; and look with Concern upon the Persons who are involuntarily kept in it, and with Disdain upon the little-minded unmanly Creatures, who reconcile themselves to it, and for the Sake of being Slaves of some Note and Rank, are even glad to give up their native Freedom, Dignity, and Glory.

SERMON. From hence, by a joyful Transition, we

XIII. are naturally led to reflect on the happy

Condition of these Nations, so different from that of the Inhabitants of almost all other Parts of the World, with respect to a Constitution, or Country: We, if any People ever had a Constitution, founded in Nature, adapted to the true Ends of a social State, and actually yielding the Advantages of that State, certainly have one. And as we are in Possession of this greatest of all temporal Blessings, the Foundation and Security of all the other Blessings of this World: it is our Duty upon this Account,

1. To be very thankful to the great Governor of the World, who in the Course of his Providence has so conducted Things, that our free Constitution remains and flourishes, when those of our Neighbours, for the most part, have been long ago destroyed; that Liberty, which was more or less shared for a Time, among the several Nations and Governments, which in these *Western* Parts of the World, arose from the Ruins of the *Roman* Empire, but is now banished out of most of them, has taken a peculiar and fixed Residence with us, and brought along with it its natural Benefits and Advantages, Security, Strength, Commerce,

merce, Riches, Plenty, Improvements in Science, Knowledge, and all the useful and elegant Arts of Life. 2. Upon the same Foundation it becomes us, to entertain a high Veneration for the Memories of those most brave and worthy Men, who were the Instruments of providing and conveying to us this great Happiness. The full Establishment of a free and independent Constitution, is sometimes the Work of immense Labour and Toil, which from small Beginnings, by constant struggling against the Efforts of Tyranny and Faction, and at a vast Expence of Treasure and Blood, is at length brought to Perfection. It is certain that this was the Price paid for the Constitution which we enjoy: We must, therefore, be quite lost to all the Sentiments of Ingenuity and Gratitude, if we do not reflect with a just Respect and Admiration on the Conduct of those noble Spirits, who exerted themselves so gloriously, in behalf of their own Rights and Privileges, and those of their Fellow-Citizens, and of Posterity, and generously determined, rather than give them up, to fall Sacrifices, as Multitudes of them did, in the Cause of Liberty and their Country. We must likewise be very destitute of all generous Principles,

Principles, if we do not greatly reverence the Memories of those magnanimous Princes, who instead of making use of the Power which they possessed, to invade our Liberties, and destroy the Constitution, employed it all to vindicate and assert our Freedom, and strengthen and confirm our Plan of Government; and as this was remarkably the Conduct of the heroic Prince, who by bringing about our last great Revolution, delivered, restored, and improved the free Constitution of these Nations, his Name must be ever precious, while a Spirit of Liberty, and a Sense of Justice and Honour remain among us. 3. Lastly, From a Sense of the Happiness at present resulting to us from our Constitution, we must be naturally inspired with Zeal to continue and perpetuate it. But as this is a Point, which I shall have Occasion to touch upon hereafter, I only mention it now, without staying to enlarge upon it.

3. The last general Observation which I shall make from the Words of the Psalmist, is, that *the more perfect the Constitution of any Country, or Society is, the greater should be the Zeal of all interested in it, for its Support and Preservation.* The affectionate and earnest Concern which the Psalmist

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must expressed for his Country, was founded not merely on his perceiving that there was a Constitution among the *Hebrews*, which in some Degree carried on the Ends of Society, and promoted the Happiness of it; but on his seeing that they had a most excellent System or Plan of Polity, which was most admirably calculated for serving the Purposes of a social Union, and would have effectually secured to the People, provided they consulted their own Interests, and co-operated with the Constitution, all the main Branches of temporal Happiness, together with the Profession of the true Religion. A Constitution of this Sort, could not fail to engage the highest Esteem and Affection of every Mind that reflected, and was governed by rational and good Principles: And every other Constitution, as it approaches towards the same Perfection, must of necessity be proportionably valued and regarded by Mankind. This is a Point so clear, that Words seem to be no more wanted to illustrate it, than to shew why Men should be fond of Life, Health, Light, Wisdom, or any of those Things which are most apparently useful, and most plainly speak their own Praise and Commendation.

SERM.

XIII

Instead, therefore, of dwelling on the Illustration of the Observation, let us rather consider what Improvement we are to make of it; for it is certain, that it will bear a very close Application to ourselves, who by the Favour of Heaven, and the Courage and Virtue of our Ancestors, have got a Constitution, which will vie with most that we have heard of, whether in ancient, or modern Times. It is not my Intention to enter into a Dissertation upon the various Plans or Models of Civil Polity, and the respective Advantages and Disadvantages of each; nor to give any particular Account of the Principles of our own Government, and the Frame of our Constitution. The latter may be supposed to be in general pretty well known to every Man of common Sagacity and Observation among us. It will be sufficient to observe, that our Constitution is a Mixture of the three original simple Forms, into which the Government of a People may be thrown; from a just and well-proportioned Composition of which, in the Judgment of all the greatest Masters of political Wisdom, the best Frame of a civil State is to be erected. The Evils of the several simple Forms of Government are so great and palpable, that

Men

Men soon perceived and felt them : They, *SENSE*
therefore, in several Parts of the World, *XIII*
had Recourse to a complicated Scheme, in
which they endeavoured to blend and unite
the simple Forms, so as to retain the Be-
nefits of them, and to guard as much as
was possible against their Inconveniences.
This was the Intention of those who had
the Formation and Modelling of our Con-
stitution, perhaps from the first Foundation
of it, but most certainly and apparently du-
ring the latter Periods of it, in which, by
means of some happy Revolutions, it re-
ceived such considerable Emendations, as
have brought it nearer, than at least the
greatest Part of the Constitutions that we
have had any Account of, to the due Tem-
perament and Poise of an equal Govern-
ment ; as the several constituent Powers of
it, are so adapted to one another, and so
mutually ballanced, that they can All with-
great Facility concur in promoting the
common Good, while no one of them can
pursue a separate Interest, or make At-
tempts upon the Freedom and Indepen-
dence of the other two, but with great
Difficulty, and not without a manifest Ha-
zard of injuring and ruining itself in the
Issue. The Beauty of this Constitution must
appear

SECT. appear in a very clear Light to those, who
XIX are able, and will be at the Pains, to trace
 it back to its first Principles, and to take a
 View of the natural Tendencies and Operations of these. But the Perfection of it, will be most universally understood, by attending to what we see to be its actual Consequences and Effects. For to what but the excellent Spirit of the Constitution of these Nations, especially since the last great Settlement and Improvement of it, is it owing, that besides our enjoying at Home, the Blessings of Peace and Plenty, a just and impartial Execution of our Laws, and together with a national Establishment, or publick Direction in Matters of Religion, a Toleration of all other Forms of Religion consistent with the publick Safety, we have for upwards of half a Century made so great a Figure abroad, in supporting the common Interest and Cause of Europe? That we have so gloriously, and upon the whole, successfully exerted ourselves, in resisting the Progress of Tyranny, and defeating the Design of an *universal Monarchy*, and are still able to throw such Difficulties and Obstacles in the Way of it, as it is to be hoped, under the Protection of Heaven, will be sufficient to render it in the End as

vain

explained, illustrated, and enforced.

vain and ineffectual, as it is in itself wicked and execrable? We have indeed great Advantages from our Situation, and from the Numbers, Industry, and Genius of our People; but these Things would be but of little Avail to us, (as is plain enough from the poor Account which they almost always turn to, when any of them are to be found in Countries of arbitrary Rule) were it not for the free and equal Spirit of our Government, which by giving Opportunity and Encouragement to make the proper Use of them, has thereby raised us to that Height of Power and Greatness which we possess: And if the Freedom and Vigour of our Constitution is but preserved, (which, under the Princes of the present Royal Family, if we judge from their known Characters, and the Experience which we have hitherto had of them, we may assure ourselves, provided we perform our own Part, will be the Case) it must undoubtedly render us superior to all the arbitrary Powers around us, and not only enable us to maintain our own Tranquillity and Independency, but give us still more eminently the distinguishing Honour, which we at present have, of being the Patrons and Guardians of the Liberties of Mankind,

and

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S 2 1 2
XIII

SERM. and the Dread and Scourge of Tyrants and
XIII. Oppressors.

 The Inference from all this, is very obvious, and easily drawn; that since we are blessed with a Constitution of so much Excellence and Importance, we should be full of Ardour and Zeal for its Safety and Prosperity. We must indeed fall under such an Infatuation, as makes Men wantonly, or desperately, throw away Health and Life, if we are ever willing to give it up, or to exchange it for any System of absolute Government; and we must be void both of all Goodness and Greatness of Mind, quite degenerated from the Virtue and Bravery of Spirit, which animated our Progenitors, if we suffer it through any Indolence or Carelessness of ours, to be destroyed, or impaired; nay, if we are not always vigilant for its Stability and Security, and anxious to preserve it entire and pure, and to transmit it in a flourishing Condition to Posterity. But as great as our Corruptions are in several Respects, it is to be hoped, that there are still good Principles enough left in us, to engage and warm our Zeal in so generous and interesting a Cause, and that it would look like an unjust Suspicion, to press this Matter by any farther

Farther Arguments. I shall, therefore, for *SERM.*
a Conclusion of the Whole, only briefly *XIII.*
consider (without intending however to med-
dle with Things out of my Sphere) what the
principal Dangers and Evils are, which in-
deed seem to lie open enough to every Eye,
that threaten our Constitution, and how
far it may be in our Power to prevent, or
remedy them.

It is certainly very happy for us, that
one of the greatest Dangers and Dif-
ficulties, which those who went before us,
in discharging the honourable Trust of
watching for the Safety and Interest of their
Country, had to guard against, is now re-
moved; I mean the Intention which ap-
peared so plainly and frequently in the
Crown, to encroach upon the Indepen-
dence of the Constitution, and to destroy
the Liberties of the People. Thanks be to
Heaven, that this Danger vanished at the
Time of our last glorious *Revolution*, when
the Power of the Prince was more expli-
citly than ever before limited, and the
Rights of the Subject were more fully de-
clared and settled, and the Laws were with
greater Certainty, made equally the Measure
of the Government and Administration of
the one, and of the Duty and Obedience

SERMON. of the other; and that our Kings have ever
 XIII. since, not merely from Necessity, but from
 Principle and Inclination, which is particularly the Glory of the present Reign, ruled according to Law, and the Principles and Spirit of the Constitution. The remaining Dangers, therefore, which all the Lovers of their Country among us are to arm themselves against, seem to be chiefly, the one which arises from the evil Designs of that restlessly ambitious, and exorbitant Power abroad, which is the natural and irreconcilable Enemy of the Religion and Liberty of these Nations; and that, which proceeds from our own Disorders and Corruptions. It is not to be doubted, if that Power which has been so long aiming at the Dominion of *Europe*, should succeed in its Views upon the Continent, but that our Constitution would be in imminent Hazard; as the whole Attention and Force of our Enemies would then be turned upon our Destruction, which would certainly appear to them a necessary Measure, for both a fuller Accomplishment of their End, and a Security to their other Acquisitions and Possessions. But though some vigorous Efforts have of late been made by them, for compassing their long meditated Design; yet,

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yet, if the Measure of our Iniquity be not
filling up very fast, and we are not by the
righteous Judgment of God, as a Punish-
ment of our Ingratitude and Perverseness,
to be deprived of what is at present our dis-
tinguishing Happiness and Glory, there
seems to be no Cause for any violent Un-
easiness and Fear, from any Success which
our Adversaries have hitherto had: If we
are but true to our own Interest, and act
as becomes Freemen, and good Christians,
there is the greatest Reason to think, that
we have still Strength enough, in Con-
junction with our Allies, by the Blessing of
Heaven, to baffle the most powerful At-
tempts of our Enemies, and to make them
end in their utter Disappointment, Disgrace,
and Confusion. The other Danger to our
Constitution, which proceeds from our in-
ternal State, the Disorders and Corruptions
which abound among us, is indeed much
more formidable: It is sufficiently known,
that Vice has been the Bane of the most
flourishing States and Kingdoms, and, in
many Instances, destroyed a People, whom
no foreign Enemy could distress. It is
likewise very evident, that this deadly Poi-
son has diffused itself widely and deeply
among us, insomuch, that there is hardly

SERM. any Order or Rank of Persons who have
XIII. wholly escaped the Infection of it, and in
some it appears with the most threatening
and fatal Symptoms. Besides the ordinary
Vices of Sensuality and Debauchery, Ani-
mosity and Faction, which, in the present
State of human Depravity, will, perhaps,
always more or less prevail in all large So-
cieties and populous States, and which have
grown to a great and alarming Height
among us, some Corruptions, which in
former Ages were very much unknown in
these Nations, have for a considerable Time
past been creeping in, and gradually gain-
ing Ground; such as an undisguised Pro-
faneness, an open and avowed Contempt of
the Duties of Divine Worship, a Denial
not only of all revealed Religion, but of
the Principles of natural Religion itself; a
ridiculing of the Notions of Good and Evil,
Right and Wrong, and the treating all mo-
ral Obligations as mere Fictions and Illu-
sions. It is to be hoped, indeed, that this
wretched Corruption of good Principles, is
not become so general, as to be in any Sort
our distinguishing Character; but it has
certainly spread far enough to excite the
Zeal of all Lovers of their Country to put
a Stop to it, considering that the inevitable
Effect

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Effect of its continuing to prevail must be
a Dissolution of Morals, and consequently
the Rain of all social Order and Happiness.

As these Things must necessarily follow
from the Progress of that Corruption of
Principles, which has been introduced a-
mong us, every one who understands our
present Situation, and has the Interest of
the Publick really at Heart, must undoubt-
edly lay himself out to check the growing
Profaneness and Licentiousness of the Age,
and to raise a serious Sense of Piety and
Virtue in the Minds of all around him.
And no Man must say that it is altogether
out of his Power to contribute to these
Ends. The Weakest and Lowest may pro-
mote them, at least by a good Example;
and others of us, not only by that, but by
the several Methods of Instruction, Persua-
sion, and Reproof, in Proportion to our
Abilities and Opportunities, particularly a-
mong those, over whom, either a natural
Relation, or our Character and Station in
Life may have given us Authority and In-
fluence. If then we profess to have a Love
for our Country, let us in these Ways sin-
cerely endeavour to put away all licentious
Principles and Practices from among us;
and to bring those we converse with under

SERM. the full Power of all moral and religious

XIII. Obligations; being solicitous to engage them

not only to the Duties of Justice and Humanity, which indeed the very Necessities of Men, and the most natural and busy Instincts in their Hearts will always in some Measure incline them to, but to the Exercise of a rational Devotion, to make them fix their Attention habitually upon the Deity, and to act under a stedfast lively Persuasion of their Accountableness to him as their righteous Governor and Judge; which Things, however exploded as absurd Superstitions, by many who would pass for the most acute and discerning Persons, are really of the greatest Excellence in themselves, and of admirable Use for keeping us steady and uniform in the Practice of Virtue, and indeed so necessary for this Purpose, that our Neglect of them must ever be attended with great Defects in many other Branches of our Duty. If such a Spirit of true Religion should spread and prevail, we might hope for greater and more durable Advantages to the Publick from it, than from any other Thing whatsoever; as it would stop up the great Source of our publick Disorders and Calamities, by curing the Degeneracy of our Minds, and as

it would engage all the Members of the **SERMON**
 Community, from the Supreme Governor **XIII**
 to the meanest Subject, according to their
 several Capacities and Stations, to perform
 all those Duties which are immediately pro-
 ductive of the publick Welfare, as well as
 the Means of procuring us the Protection
 and Favour of Heaven. Let us, therefore,
 contribute whatever may be in our Power
 to the raising such an excellent Spirit, and
 by doing so, we shall approve ourselves no
 less true Friends and Lovers of our Country
 than good Christians, and be entitled to a
 Reward not only from God, but from
 Mankind: Whereas, on the contrary, if we
 are indifferent or negligent in this Matter,
 we shall shew ourselves to be void of the
 Principles both of Religion and publick
 Virtue; and our pretending this * Day to
Sanctify a Fast, for averting the Judgments
 of God from these Nations, and imploring
 his Protection and Blessing to them, must
 appear to be but a solemn Mockery of
 Heaven, and vile and odious Hypocrisy.

* This Sermon was wrote upon Occasion of one of our
 late publick Fasts.

F I N I S



ERRATA

Page 18, Line 16, *after Humanity, add, or some Species*
or Appearance of them; Page 128, Line 4, Delete it.

* The Editor was wrong upon Comma of one of our
last publick Lib.